

A MODEL TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE IN THE CHURCH

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **A MODEL TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE CHURCH**

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#### **Faculty Mentors**

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The context of the project is Oakley Full Gospel Church in Columbus OH. The objective of this project is to increase awareness of domestic abuse within the congregation which will in turn affect the community. The hypothesis is through the teaching of current trends of domestic violence; an increased awareness of domestic violence will be enhanced. The methodology used to test the hypothesis will be quantitative through the use of pre and post questionnaires, surveys and interviews. The study will take place between a five to seven week process incorporating workshops, interviews and seminars.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot begin to thank God enough for the love and compassion that I have received during the process of this journey. As the song goes: “Without God I could nothing, without God I would surely fail, without God my life would be rugged, like a ship without a sail.” Then to my girls, my babies, natural and spiritual. Tawanna, who encouraged me and prayed with me and for me, reminding me that we don’t quit, we are winners. LaDonna, removed every element of stress that she could and pushed me every day, being my mother instead of me being hers.

Last but not least, Evelyn strong prayer warrior, intercessor, and friend for life. She prayed in season and out of season as she has done through our years of friendship.

I have been blessed beyond measure with my professional associate’s one being Dr. Debra Dennis who prayed with me, shared words of wisdom and introduced me to my editor, Dr. Jessica Johnson, an absolute blessing in my life. Dr. Tiffany Dent, Psychotherapist and Dr. Wanza Jackson Female Prison Chaplain. The contextual associates Jenita Johnson and Karen Ferguson who God strategically put in my life, they are totally amazing. These women worked in unity with me as organizers and coordinators and stood with me continuously through this process.

Gratitude goes out to my mentors Dr. Robert Walker, Dr. Kenneth Cummings, who have encouraged and challenged me through this entire process. Your guidance and labor is beyond any words that I could express. I could not have gotten through this

process without your encouragement. Appreciation and gratitude goes out to the faculty consultant Dr. Magdalene. I am thankful to every woman, man and girl that took the time to participate in a support group, interview, church service, summit and workshop.

## **DEDICATIONS**

I dedicate this to all the women that have had an impact on my life. First of all, to my mother Lillian Maynard, who wanted so much for me and never got to see my achievements. Then, to my god-mother, who left this life much too soon but left a major imprint on the lives of many. To my spiritual mother who was a lady of ladies and taught me so much. I have been blessed by every woman that I have seen move from Trauma to Triumph through transformation of ministry.

I cannot forget the women who have suffered the pain, and emotional distress of domestic abuse in any form, to those that have survived and those did not make it. To my baby boy, who finds ways to be positive sharing that “I know you can do it” as he continues on his own life journey.

## INTRODUCTION

We live in a society where people are oppressed and depressed every day. Stress and anxiety dominate a major part of many lives. With many stressful situations that face us daily, it would be wonderful to live without the pressure of fear. Unfortunately, for women in abusive relationships this is not the case. One out of every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Adding another level of anxiety to many lives brings us to another statistical reality: ninety-five percent of all domestic violence victims are women. Every two minutes someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.<sup>2</sup> The main focus of this project is to bring a higher level of awareness concerning domestic violence to the church. There is some knowledge among the church body, but it has been ignored or suppressed for generations. This serious problem lies dormant in the crevices of our churches. The teaching of the Bible has been limited to the messages that make women feel subordinate as they succumb to becoming subjects of obedience. There are no messages that challenge the reality of life from the woman's perspective in most faith organizations.<sup>3</sup> Domestic violence is a reality of life and it does exist in the church. The church must realize that it is time to embrace social justice issues,

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<sup>1</sup> Domestic violence statistics

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> R.P. Dobash and R.E. Dobash. *Violence against Wives: A Case Against the Patriarchy* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

domestic violence being one of them. As the church we must be more open minded to the reality of the flaws of abuse in our midst. There is an epidemic that exists in our churches and it comes under the guise of sexual assault and physical and verbal abuse.

The first chapter of this project addresses the context concerning women sitting in the churches in Columbus, OH that are in crisis. The ministry focus will outline how this project challenges bishops, elders, and other clergy who find this topic too sensitive to address. The overall approach to this project will include the thoughts, experiences and challenges of the writer, as well as those of other women who have attempted to address this problem within religious arenas. Women have held on to their faith in God without the support from their pastors and clergy members while trying to move forward.<sup>4</sup>

Chapter two reviews the volumes of literature that recognize the need to overcome the obstacles that hinder the impartation of a much needed domestic violence ministry into the church. The research establishes the association that needs to exist between the church and those who provide professional training. This professional training addresses violence against women who sit silently hurting in many churches. When women have the reassurance that leadership is concerned about their well-being, there will be a new level of confidence in those who have been chosen to watch over their souls.

Chapter three, which is the theoretical summary, explains the connection of this project to stories of violence perpetrated against women in the Bible. The foundation for this project creates an understanding of the initial onset that catapulted many women into

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<sup>4</sup>Storkey, Elaine. 2011. "A liberating woman: Catherine Clark Kroeger championed women's equality without budging on scriptural authority." *Christianity Today* 55, no. 7: 42-45. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 19, 2014).

a victim mentality. Women who have been molested and or raised in single parent homes suffer from low self-esteem and abandonment issues and are more likely to become victims of domestic violence. The theoretical foundation constructs the theological, historical and biblical reinforcement for this theme.<sup>5</sup>

Chapter four explores the methodology, which consists of focus groups who reviewed past responses of clergy and participated in seminars and training sessions such as Domestic Violence Alert!<sup>6</sup> A marriage ceremony to Jesus was conducted for the women who completed the project.

Chapter five includes a resource manual on what the church can do to produce an effective proposal that will create a higher level of awareness. This manual will be used as a tool that will generate positive change in the areas of domestic violence in the church.

The final chapter summarizes the study along with recommendations from clergy, professional counselors and those trained in this area for a more in-depth examination if necessary. The writer's greatest objective is that this will open the needed lines of communication between the church and those who have been/are victims of domestic violence. The prayer of the writer is that these lines of communication open the floodgates of healing. As healing takes place in each church community, the exposure generates a greater desire for intense involvement of other clergy across Ohio.

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<sup>5</sup> A. Elaine Brown Crawford, *A Hope in A Holler, A Womanist Theology* (Westminster :John Knox Press,1947).

<sup>6</sup> John W. Creswell; *Third Edition Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (SAGE Publications, Inc. 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks California 91320:2009),129.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**MINISTRY FOCUS**  
**Adolescence**

As I reflect on my life's journey thus far, I have no doubt that my life is truly destined for the ministry that has chosen me. My life's history is surrounded by ministers, evangelists, and as they were called back in the day, missionaries. I have three brothers who have been and are presently in the ministry. One is a bishop, who started preaching at the age of seventeen and pastoring at the age of twenty-one. The other is a pastor and another is a deacon. My family overflows in many areas of ministry.

My son has pastored, and I have nieces, nephews, uncles, and aunts who have ministered in other areas. So I have been involved in ministry all my life. My mother could quote scriptures without ever opening her Bible. Although she was not the most straight and narrow Christian, I believe that she loved God and believed everything God said was true.

I was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on February 14, 1948. It often seemed that being the fifth child was a curse but in the Bible the number five symbolizes God's grace, goodness and favor toward humans and is mentioned 318 times in Scripture. Five is the number of grace and multiplied by itself, which is twenty five is "grace upon grace" (John 1:16). The Ten Commandments contain two sets of five commandments. The first five commandments are related to our relationship with God, and the last five concern

our relationship with others. With all that appeared to be negative about my life, this information gives way to the positive things concerning my life.

Mother said that as a child there were two things that were very different about me. One was that I prayed all the time as a little girl, and the other was that I was born with a special gift called a veil. There is some controversy surrounding this gift. Some may not understand the concept of it. The veil is a very thin skin over one's eyes. Due to the spiritual and cultural beliefs of the African American community regarding the veil, I was called a seer. Dr. Kenneth Cummings explained it this way, "According to 1 Samuel 9:9, in Israel anyone who went to inquire of God would say, 'Come let us go to the seer, for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer.'"<sup>1</sup> This passage conveys the sense that the term seer was in the past simply a common, popular name for a prophet (p.896, Vol.3, *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*).<sup>2</sup>

My father had a son by his ex-wife whom I never really bonded with. The Goodall family was known to me only through my father's brothers. My uncles visited me consistently and shared their various memories of his character. Their descriptions of him were honorable. His only problem seemed to be alcohol. I did not use my father's name until I was older. I was known as a Maynard throughout my school years. My father's son and I would see each other on very rare occasions and then it was like talking to a stranger. My brother died eight years ago of colon cancer. Attending his funeral was

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Dr. Kenneth Cummings: Prophetic Preaching and Praxis: Referencing Dr. Samuel Proctor: The Prophets Quiver. Peer Session presentation (October 2014).

<sup>2</sup> *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (p.896, Vol.3).

very uncomfortable. I did not know how to feel. It did bring me and my nephew closer and we have built a relationship since my brother's death.

I bonded with the grandmother of my older siblings. Mother Maynard, as she was called, was the founder of Maynard Temple Church of God in Christ in the city of Muncie, Indiana. As a child I sat at my grandmother's knees as she sang hymns and ministered the gospel in her white dress and plain face. It would appear that I had more of her DNA (spiritually) than my sister. When I was not with my grandmother, I sang with my mother as she played the piano and often listened to Oral Roberts on the radio. My mother was raised as a Seventh Day Adventist, completely different from the belief of my grandmother.

#### Middle Madness

(Job 3:11-16 NKJV)

Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?  
 Why were there knees to receive me and breasts that I might be nursed? For now I would be lying down in Peace; I would be asleep and at rest with kings and rulers of the earth, who built for themselves places now lying in ruins with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver. Or why was I not hidden away in the ground like a stillborn child, like an infant who never saw the light of day?<sup>3</sup>

As the fifth child there were many challenges that I would face. Although I had a total of six brothers and sisters, there was a six year difference between my older brother and me as well as six years between me and my younger sister. Being the darkest in the bunch, my mother's grandmother would not let me in her house because of my color. I am not sure if the gift that I was given made me analytical or if it was just the fact that I wanted to know why some things were so different. There is one thing that we know and

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<sup>3</sup> New King James Version

that is in this life there are no guarantees. Life throws curves. But on another note there are good things that we know and that is God has already predestined our lives from the womb. There would be very small increments of tranquility in my life, but no matter what would come God would give me the strength to get through it.

Trauma came into my life through abuse at the age of five. I was physically abused for years by a family member. These are memories I would rather forget, but they cannot be erased from the pain that negatively and positively shaped my life. After my two younger sisters were born, we moved from one house to another until we finally settled into a permanent residence. Monday through Friday we lived in a normal household, but when Friday came the calm would shift to chaos. On many of those occasions I would escape to Muncie to be with my step-grandmother. That is where I found sanity and solace.

My mother had a good heart but did not know how to positively express that goodness. She was also an angry woman who had been hurt, mistreated and misunderstood due to being given away to her grandmother at a young age. Her grandmother was evil, mean, inconsiderate, and selfish. The behavior of her grandmother would negatively shape my mother's behavior. The behavior that was experienced in our home would negatively influence my sisters and me on many different levels.

The greatest thing that could have happened to me in my adolescent years was to finally settle into a stable home. This was a major relief for my sisters and me. The fact that we did not have to move anymore gave us all a sigh of relief. There was now a sense of security in our lives. We finally had enough room for each of us to have our own room and that in itself was heaven. My mother held a very tight leash on me. My life was not

normal. I was not allowed to go anywhere with anyone at any time. I got out as soon as I could. I often pondered the normal life of a teenager. I could not be normal because I was my mother's assistant. I made sure that everything was in order, and I watched my younger sisters while our mother worked.

### Traumatic Teens

Before I could finish high school my life would take a devastating turn. I was fifteen going into my senior year, not realizing my life would be changed forever. It was a Friday night and the boy I was very infatuated with was playing football. To go to this game would be a miracle. This would be one of the rare occasions that my mother would say yes to a request. This would be the best or should I say the worst night of my life. Never in my wildest dreams would I think that my world would be turned upside down in one night. I would become a mother at the age of fifteen. It was terrifying. I made one mistake and this happened to me. Why God? My veil did not warn me of this, maybe because I wasn't really concerned about the things of God. I just wanted to live a normal life. At this point my life would be catapulted into a cycle of horrifying experiences. My self-esteem was in the toilet. I was so ashamed. I had embarrassed my whole family. My mother wanted me to have an abortion, but that was not God's plan. As hard as she tried, nothing worked.

### Motherhood and Marriage

I was a mother of three by the age of eighteen. I met my first husband when I was seventeen and he was twenty-three. Six months later we decided to go to his hometown in Kentucky and get married. The next year of my life would be the happiest year that I had

experienced up to that point. After my eighteenth birthday we moved back to Indianapolis where I was stripped of all tranquility and happiness. I was now nineteen and alone again with two girls and a boy to raise without my husband. My therapy was drowning myself in education so that I could raise my children.

Finishing LPN school two years later would give me the needed finances that were required to provide for my family. As I was making rounds on the evening shift, a very muscular man visited my floor, very similar to the football player/actor Rosie Grier in build and looks. This man approached me with a big smile and determination in his voice. He adamantly told me that I would be his wife. I continued on my way, not really expecting to see this man again. He showed up with flowers, cards, candy, and trinkets for six months and finally asked me out. We married eight months later. This man appeared to be my knight in shining armor, but he would become my greatest nightmare.

This relationship hurled me back to God with desperation and much prayer. I became a prisoner in my own home. I lived in total isolation, and my children were verbally and physically abused. I was cut off from my family and was not allowed to use the phone. My children could not understand why I allowed this to happen to them or myself. They were constantly afraid. We all lived in fear for most of the marriage. The abuse that we suffered affected my children in ways I never would imagine. My oldest daughter ran away from home, and I would not see or hear from her for years. My middle daughter suffers with paranoid schizophrenia and drug addiction. My son became detached and bitter. Only the grace and mercy of God could heal this situation. It was very difficult to explain to my young children the mistake that I had made for the sake of what I thought was love. The worst part was I did not know how to get them out of it.

without losing my life, as well as the people I loved so dearly. I was beaten when my husband felt the urge and that was often. I lived ten years in an abusive marriage. Even when my husband went to prison, he still managed to intimidate me while he was behind bars. His prison term did not seem to be long enough. I dreaded the day that I had to take the trip to pick him up. A year and a half after his release, I knew I could no longer live with the threats on the lives of family members, the stalking, the beatings, and the intimidation of myself and my children. In desperation I attempted to poison him. Realizing I could have gone to jail, it was time to leave and not look back. I filed for a divorce, and even in court with police around I feared this man. One month after the divorce was final, I finally felt safe. This was a false sense of safety.

I was preparing to go out job hunting, but before I could go out the door someone came knocking. I opened the door and it was him. He pushed his way in, believing that he had caught me alone. An in-law had told him where I lived. He had been stalking me for quite a while. He began to make unreasonable requests, offering me money. When I would not comply he reminded me of his promise to love me to death. He emphasized his plans to end my life that day. I would eventually be stabbed thirteen times. My lung was punctured and my heart was pierced. My children would get off the bus from school not expecting to see their mother being stabbed. In his effort to protect me my son would be stabbed in the kidneys and my daughter's hand would be cut severely as she grabbed the knife. Lying in a coma for ten days between life and death, the doctors would finally confirm that I would live. This is when I would begin to live, knowing that God had saved my life. The next two years of my life would be centered on my relationship with God. I was content for once in my life. I had spent ten years in a terrible marriage. Now it

was time to focus on God, my children and myself. Marriage was nowhere on my agenda until my spiritual daughter entered my life. She believed that I needed some joy in my life, which she thought was going to come through her uncle. She decided to bring him along to a monthly home meeting to introduce him to me and Jesus.

I spent months seeking confirmation from my brother, my pastor and friends if I was to marry this man. If I had followed the leading of the Lord and the counsel of those with spiritual wisdom, I would have saved myself a lot of grief and pain. I married a drug addict/dealer who loved me but loved drugs more. I divorced him after seven years of valley experiences. The most recent and last marriage came about as God was pushing me out of the nest of my family church where I had been for eighteen years. The dependency was crippling me and I didn't even realize it. This was a very difficult transition stepping outside of known territory going to what seemed a foreign land. God was changing more than my surroundings. He was shifting my life into greater dependence on him and not people.

I met my ex-husband five months after I moved my membership to this new church. He approached me one Sunday after service and informed me that he had noticed me from the pulpit as I walked down the aisle to give my offering. He knew that one day I would be his wife. I was truly scared of those words. I had heard them before. I volunteered to help him find the woman that God had for him and that was absolutely not me. Church members begin to pick up on his attraction to me. My family who followed me to this church would tease me about his overwhelming attention. There was a constant emphasis placed on his attraction to me. Three years later I married him.

This marriage was more traumatic for me than all of the others. I married all the deception that came with him. He had read the Bible seven times from the front to the back. He could quote scripture, verse and page without opening the Bible but did not know what it meant or the value of God's word. He used the word for his own interpretation. The meaning of "A man that findeth a wife findeth a good thing" had no relevance in his life. The mandate that requires a husband to provide, protect and cover did not register on his radar. I spent twenty-two years praying that things would change and that he would step up and be the man that God intended him to be. I spent twenty-two years being alone, sharing space but being alone. We went to the same church but I was alone.

It appeared that his deepest aspiration was to impress the church and appease his children from his first marriage and visit me on occasion. During the last four years of the marriage he became financially and verbally abusive. Anger, bitterness and resentment of my desire for education kicked in. I knew with the release from God, and my mental and physical status intact, it was time to move on. That move brought me to Columbus, OH. Although we have been separated for seven years and divorced for four years, I am still tied to this man financially. I am experiencing the repercussions of this marriage as I proceed through this doctoral process.

As a minister of the gospel I have spent many years incorporating encouragement into my messages, as well as building positive curriculums as employment opportunities have allowed me to. In the midst of seminars and workshops I wanted to develop something women could take with them that would last longer than a meeting. During one of my painful moments in life, my brother informed me that I needed an inner

healing. These were profound words that literally changed my life. I took these words and turned them into a ministry tool titled “Inner Healing/Silent Hurting.” Recently these words came back to hit me in the head. As I was on my way to do this presentation I had to stop and ask the question, “Am I healed?” In many ways I could say yes and yet in other ways I had to say no, but I was more aware of my shortcomings in a positive way. As I did this workshop, I was challenged to grow and evolve in the same way many others are. In life we must continue to lay aside every weight and the sin of that weight that can so easily beset us. Life has its way of keeping you weighted down by failed relationships, negativity, brokenness, mistakes, and deceptions, but the healing word of God reminds us that there is a “balm in Gilead” that has healing for every mistake, lie, condemnation, and sin.

As we are healed inwardly the mindset is different. The validation from others is not as important. I am now in the best relationship of my life with Jesus, who is the best husband that I have ever known. I am on a journey that I have never experienced before. I was able to finish my master’s at United Theological Seminary where I met my present pastor and eventually joined his church. Pastor McReynolds and I began the doctoral program at the same time.

Reflection of my ministry journey takes me back to my early preaching days. I was embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes, but I kept on preaching and praying through the encouragement of my god-mother. Being a facilitator in the prison system for women was a great experience. I was twenty-one years old and not sure why God chose me to take ministry into the prison. Prison ministry was not at the top of my list, but it would become a prevalent part of my life for many years. As a facilitator for Chuck

Colson Prison Ministries, I also partnered with other groups to advance ministry into other facilities. The ministry became a very positive experience for the group and the inmates. Spiritual success came in small ways, while the challenges of life often caused me to question God and his true purpose for my life. For every ministry challenge, the life challenges were greater.

As the Lord began to develop ministry in me it would take on many facets. Ministry for me has been to those in the margins. Being one who was once considered as marginalized, what would be my lot but to return spiritually to where I came from naturally: the homeless welfare recipient, the rejected unwed mother, the abused and promiscuous teen with low self-esteem, and most prominently the battered and abused woman who once lived in fear. God would place compassion in my heart for women struggling just to make it through this journey in life, women who were fighting to take every step.

Did serving God have to be this hard? At every critical juncture in my life I felt like I was being hit with a brick, one brick after another. Somewhere along the line something kicked in and said, "Don't let the bricks hit you. Catch the bricks. They will be useful later." That was a thought. I began to collect the bricks, realizing that each brick had significance in establishing the order of my life. These bricks were also building ministry. Somewhere along the way there came a revelation that what was meant to bruise could really be used to bless me. The bricks that would eventually build my life were the bricks that were intended to destroy my life.

The first brick was molestation at the age of five. The brick of rejection, which began in my childhood, pushed me into the throes of future issues. The brick of unwed

motherhood would follow. Then came the brick of homelessness, and I almost forgot the brick of incarceration. But the most damaging brick of all would be the brick of ongoing abuse. This final brick was intended to take me out, not only knock me out, but take me totally out. There is no doubt that my life was destined for ministry, although I did not realize the cost of ministry would be so high. I believed gifts were free. The cost of this ministry was very high. Bonhoeffer wrote, "... is the grace we bestow on ourselves...grace without discipleship...Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must know....It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life." This powerful statement brought proper perspective to what God was saying about my life. I did not choose this life. This life chose me. I was truly predestined in my mother's womb.

An ongoing relationship with God from my youth did not eliminate major periods of aloneness. Serving God can be the loneliest place in the world. The more I prayed the worse things seemed to get. Then again there were times when what I learned as a child would kick in and carry me through some of the most traumatic experiences in my life. I could hear the scriptures that my mother would quote and remember my grandmother preaching about the goodness of God. These experiences would give me the strength that I needed to keep going.

The most traumatic experiences would prepare me for the ministry that God ordained for my life. The Bible says in Luke 12:48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." My brother reminded me of this often. In my early years I did not want to be given anything or have anything required of me.

My experiences caused me to be broken with a negative view on life. One thing that I realized in my ministry journey is that most ministers have had major struggles in some area, which is really the making of the man. Many of those who have been abused and suffered low self-esteem, rejection and guilt while struggling to find their place often become the most effective ministers. Who knew that one day the bricks of life would build character, integrity and a passion to serve the highest God without reservation or doubt? Domestic violence became a reality to me in the early years of my life and has been dominant in some form for many years. As I looked to the church without resolve I asked, "Why won't the church help me?" Upon the investigation on the seriousness of domestic violence, I realize that there is a desperate need for the church to become more involved. The ignorance of their responsibility to this epidemic can no longer be ignored. Healing must be a part of the process, healing that can only come through the church.

No matter how people in the church talk and live as though they are oblivious, domestic violence continues to increase. Domestic violence is synonymous with the word shame. Shame creates silence, which ignites fear and intimidation. The church must first stand up, speak out, and not be ashamed in order for the victims to stand up, speak out, and not be ashamed. This is the only way that healing, deliverance and victory can take place. Close your eyes if you will, stick your head in the sand, turn your head, or sweep it under the rug, but it is still HERE! Church it is time to eradicate violence in our congregations. We must pull the rug back, expose this demon, and embrace and encourage those who need it the most. With the passion that I have for eradicating domestic violence, I am determined to bring greater awareness to the churches in

Columbus, OH. Domestic violence does not begin and end in the secular world. It is and has been very prevalent in the church for many years. Because of the stigma that goes along with domestic abuse, this subject has been more than taboo in the church. During many encounters networking with other organizations, I witnessed Christian women become embarrassed when they saw me at a domestic violence event. They had no idea that as a pastor's wife I would be in the room. Because of the embarrassment that might indicate that they were victims, these women tiptoed out of the room hoping that I did not see them.

As an advocate for domestic violence from 1994 to 2005, women were moved from trauma to triumph. This ministry has been one of the most rewarding things in my life, especially seeing women's lives changed by raising their self-esteem, setting goals, and becoming better educated. Women began to have a desire to achieve their life goals no matter how small or how great. These women who were once depressed, defeated, lost, and oppressed now have hopes and dreams that they know can be accomplished. This achievement is at the height of my accomplishments.

The opportunity and time that God allowed me to write the book *Job is A Lady Too!*, was very rewarding. The book has been a launching pad for annual conferences that was built around the healing of women. *Job is A Lady Too!* is a book that speaks to the life and trials of an abused woman who would question the very existence of her life and not receive a lot of answers just as Job did. *Job is a Lady Too!*<sup>4</sup> has spoken to the lives of many women across the country. Everything the devil meant for bad, God meant it for my good. God is and has been a present help in the time of trouble.

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<sup>4</sup>Betty Spraggins: *Job Is a Lady Too!* 1<sup>st</sup> ed.2000, revised 2005.

## Ministry Achievements

Chuck Colson Ministries surprisingly presented me with an award of appreciation for years of service to prison ministry in 1997. It was the first acknowledgment that I would receive for ministry. Other ministry acknowledgements would be for feeding and clothing the homeless and those suffering from drug addiction and mental illness. It has been an honor to participate in *Shattering the Silence*, an annual television documentary that is centered on domestic abuse, and to be given an Honorary Dedication Award by the Victims' Rights: Strength for Unity Organization for 12 years of commitment to community service in support of domestic violence.

*The Indianapolis Star* featured a story for my faithful work in the Indianapolis community and working independently, as well as collectively, with other organizations and churches. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing lives changed and hope restored. Deliverance and restoration was experienced in the lives of many who once felt defeated and hopeless. By God's grace I stand today more determined, more focused, more committed and more equipped through the education that I have received. I will continue to implement this project so that it may be duplicated across the country. With all of the technology that exists today, there is no reason for us to be ignorant in the church concerning an age old epidemic that we continue to sweep under the rug.

The doctorate of ministry program has been interwoven with many personal and private challenges, including total hip replacement surgery. With these challenges I am more than convinced that with the love and mercy of God, the encouragement of my peers, and the instruction of my mentors it will happen. At this point I can only become wiser, better and more equipped to perform the task that I have been instructed, ordained

and chosen to do. It is truly by God's grace that I live and move and have my very being so that I may fulfill the call that has been predestined for my life.

The project model of increasing awareness of domestic violence in the church will strive to reach its fullest potential in Columbus, seeking to remove fear of being victimized by perpetrators. Many women avoid this type of ministry for fear of exposing husbands and boyfriends, as they may be participants on different levels in the church. As a new entity in Columbus, this ministry has the opportunity to be received without fear of any participant being recognized. The organization of this ministry in Columbus is off to a fresh and thriving start.

### **The Union**

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

The model for this project began with a survey that provided the statistics needed to launch this ministry in the church. The results from the survey provide qualitative information that give credence to this project model. At this point, after many conversations with other women in various churches, the conclusion is there is a great need but many are fearful of the outcome. One of the objectives is to bring down the walls of fear from those needing the support offered.

The Domestic Violence Network and The Women of Color Network organizations admit that they receive thousands of calls from women who have gone to their churches for help and received no response. This project creates a prime opportunity to stand in the gap for these women. Meetings with leaders, advocates and consultants of

domestic violence organizations produced a great avenue of support as I explored the resources available in Columbus.

### **Conclusion**

Upon completion of qualitative research, the results supply needed information that will produce a quality model in Oakley Full Gospel Church. Exploring the level of need along with the avenues of information and support, I have the reassurance that this project is greatly needed and will continue to be supported. I have no doubt that once the success of this project is known in Columbus within the Oakley Full Gospel Church there will be no trouble duplicating this model in other churches across the city. The conjoining of Oakley Full Gospel Church and this project model "Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church" could not be a better match since Oakley is launching a social justice ministry. The social justice ministry will focus on many issues of concern across the Columbus community. This is the prime time for the merging of these two projects, which will bring awareness to many otherwise sensitive subjects.

I am thankful to God for this open door. Oakley Full Gospel embraced this project as it seeks to embrace the entire community of Columbus. The pastor stands in support of the model, which he is very sure, will be duplicated across the country. As the overseer of several other churches in Columbus, he is encouraging those churches to adopt this project as a component of their awareness and support programs.

As a supporting elder of Oakley, the pastor realizes my passion and understands that domestic violence is not just a whim or a thought that has passed through my mind. He realizes that by the anointing of God, my life experiences, and zeal for this area of ministry, I have been ordained to make this project a success. The pastor has always

wanted this type of ministry to function in the church, but had no one to do it. Pastor McReynolds desires to bring forth change that not only involves the church but the community at large.

My ministry context is Oakley Full Gospel Church on the west side of Columbus. Oakley is a mid-sized church with approximately 100 to 150 members. The congregation varies from new born babies to senior citizens. The ministerial staff consists of sixteen elders, ten women and six men. Always open to the dictates of the Holy Spirit, in 1992 the Oakley family embraced the movement of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship. This worship style, which is the return to the old, nothing new, is believed to be that of the traditional black Baptist church. On May 6, 1994, Rev. Andy C. Lewter Jr. was consecrated as bishop and installed to the office of General Overseer of the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship.

Under the continuous leadership of Bishop Lewter, Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church moved to its current location at 3415 El Paso Dr. in 1998. Bishop Lewter returned to New York and Elder Virgil Starks faithfully fulfilled the pastoral duties of the church. The Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church elected Rev. Jonathan McReynolds to serve as the pastor of the church on August 29, 2007. He was installed as the Senior Pastor on March 30, 2008. Since his arrival the church has experienced spiritual, numerical and financial growth. Pastor McReynolds was installed into the office of District Overseer in the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship in November 2009. The Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church has been a constant Christian witness. We say with saints past and present, "Look where the Lord has brought us from."

The strength of the church is the vision of the pastor and his desire to move the church into a new element of outreach and community involvement on multiple levels. The weakness of the church is the same as many other churches and that is the older members hold an invisible reign on the church. The present pastor has recently entered his sixth year of pastoring and is now making headway to implement some of the changes that he envisions. Overseer McReynolds attempts to utilize each one of his elders in a positive and effective capacity. As one of the ordained elders, my job is to preach, teach and participate in all meetings and functions concerning the leadership team.

## CHAPTER TWO

### STATE OF THE ARTS MINISTRY MODEL

We read the scriptures because they give us strength and encouragement that reinforce our faith in Christ and his love and sacrifice for a failing and lost world. Christ came that we might have life more abundantly. Victory, healing and wholeness are emphasized in God's word. For this reason I am baffled that there appears to be no significant progress concerning domestic violence existing in the church. The problem of domestic violence has been a major concern of mine for many years. The passion that resonates in my soul will not allow me to turn a deaf ear or a blind eye as many have done to an issue that needs to be exposed.

#### **Silence and Submission**

“Be silent and submit,” pastor Olden stated. “We’re only obeying the Bible.” The apparent lack of obedience of modern women was blamed for the high divorce rate. In a sermon titled “Marriage and women,” curate Mark Oden told the congregation at St. Nicholas Church, “We know marriage is not working.” He then responded by saying he was only preaching what the Bible says concerning the submission of women to their husbands.<sup>1</sup> The main scripture used to justify submission is Ephesians 5:22-24, while

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<sup>1</sup>.Mark Oden, *Be Silent and Submit*, Online sermons; accessed December 2014. [www.providence.org/sermons/s.2001](http://www.providence.org/sermons/s.2001).

verses 21 and 25 are omitted. The pastor also referenced 1 Timothy 2:11-13 and 1 Corinthians 14:26-35, reminding the church of the purpose and order of creation.<sup>2</sup>

According to this pastor's interpretation of the Bible, God gave man superiority because he was created first, causing him to be the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church. The pastor's sermon implied that the order of creation gives the man the leadership responsibility that women can never possess. He reaffirmed that it is not appropriate for the woman to teach or have authority over a man. James Poling refutes this statement in his readings in *The Cross and Male Violence*, affirming that this is the kind of information that gives men the attitude of superiority and dominance.<sup>3</sup> A message such as this could be a major reason why many women have not taken their concerns regarding domestic violence to the church. They fear that their voices will not be heard by their pastors.

### **Domestic Violence References**

As part of this project the examination of domestic violence by other writers and researchers was reviewed. An article by Christie Neuger titled "Intimate violence and pastoral theology: A review of recent literature" brings to mind an often quoted scripture within the Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).<sup>4</sup> This scripture might cause the re-examination of hierachal mindsets as they pertain to abuse of families who sit in many

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2.NKJV.

<sup>3</sup>"The Cross and Male Violence," James Poling, in *Cross Examinations: Readings on the Meanings of the Cross Today*, edited by Marit Treistald. (Online sermon) available at, Are Women Human 2014.

<sup>4</sup>NKJV..

congregations. As sons of God it would appear, as Neuger states, “We struggle to find Theological language and ministerial practice that empowers us as individuals and communities of faith to make a difference, to be peacemakers in a world where violence threatens to overwhelm us.”<sup>5</sup>

Neuger clearly states that there is concern around many social justice issues, but for some reason churches cannot seem to embrace the reality of domestic violence existing in and around their congregations. It appears that if they are not affected by this epidemic on a personal level it just does not exist. Although there are many statistics to validate these facts, there is still an overwhelming silence in response within most congregations.<sup>6</sup> Although clergy seek many titles and proclaim great gifts, they shun the great responsibilities that come with the titles they covet.

In the *Role of the Church*, John Chryssaviris speaks of his own responsibility as an ordained clergyman. Chryssaviris declares that he is bound to view the world from within the church with a difference, an added third dimension that is of heaven. He references the word “child,” clarifying that child is not defined by age but by vulnerability, and every clergyman must take care of the child. Clergy are responsible for the being and well-being of the weak and the vulnerable.

Chryssaviris takes a step further seeking not to offend as he speaks about the other weak and vulnerable child. This child needs care too. This child is the offender, reminding us that he is God’s child also. Chryssaviris looks at the role of the church from

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<sup>5</sup>Neuger, Christie Cozad. 1999. “*Intimate violence and pastoral theology: A review of recent literature.*” *Journal Of Pastoral Theology* 9, 113-120. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed December 11) 201.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

a different perspective and that is the use and abuse of power by the church. The emphasis is put on listening, hearing, and believing, as well as conveying an atmosphere of trust. There must be a pathway of trust in order for those who are seeking help to open up. The preached sermon cannot be received when the pastor's preaching is not trusted. Being honest with the victim and offender is very crucial in being effective for change in the lives of those who are abused and the role of the clergy in the church.<sup>7</sup>

### **Healing While Hurting**

As we look at the role of the church there is another perspective that should be explored, which Jeffery Means speaks about and that is the condition of those who heal. In an article titled "Mighty Prophet/ Wounded Healer," Means speaks about the issues of the caregivers and their own wounds. Means states that there are three ways the caregivers themselves have been wounded, suggesting that these wounds do hurt us and have left scars on our lives. He expresses that when these issues are respectfully and responsively dealt with the wounds are the very reason that clergy have the compassion that breeds a deeper connection to the client.<sup>8</sup>

Means continues his dialogue emphasizing that these wounds can also provide the motivation needed to transform the wounded healer dimension into the mighty prophet dimension. He reminds us that we have all been hurt, had some losses, been abused, and been broken and mended together again many times. He does not let us forget that these wounds and hurts are the building blocks that allow us to form an empathic bridge with

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<sup>7</sup>, John. Chryssavgis1989. "Child Abuse--The Role of the Church. "Greek Orthodox Theological Review 34, no. 4: 357-364. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed October, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

the people we serve. The second way that we are wounded is by the stories that we hear from the clients we meet. Without these stories there is no way of making meaning out of a particular problem.<sup>9</sup> We are also wounded by the horrendous content of these stories and by the double binds in which our clients are stuck that constantly threaten to ensnare us. Evaluating the life of a caregiver brings Means to another conclusion and that is the fact that the psychotherapeutic, chaplaincy, pastoral care giving and other therapeutic work we do contain fear and discomfort. We experience and use our responses informed by our theory and theology and supported by faith to direct our interventions in constructive ways. In his third and final example, Means addresses the wounded who come from the culture in which we work. He states that we are wounded by the fact that our culture is incredibly unsupportive of the work we do. This statement might be challenged by those who need more clarity and those who have not received support from clergy concerning certain social issues such as domestic violence.<sup>10</sup>

The transition from wounded healer to mighty prophet creates a new level of responsibility. This responsibility challenges clergy, caregivers, chaplains, pastors and ministers to do three things: believe the messengers (church members) who come to us, listen to their unpleasant messages about the culture in which we live, and speak prophetically and act courageously in response to the messages that we hear. Means states that our ultimate survival as a society depends on our willingness to do this. Those of us who care about the plights of other people and who know from experience how little our culture supports the least of us must take on the role of the mighty prophet.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

Means makes it emphatically clear that as clergy we need to make our voices heard more loudly. We need to come out further from under the bushes that hide our light. The time is ripe and the need is great for us to be wisely guided by our wounds and for us to use them faithfully, courageously and fully to become mighty prophets in a world desperately looking for direction.<sup>11</sup>

### **The Skillful Handyman**

Becoming more equipped through education, experience, trial and error, the wounded healer can become a mighty prophet. In his book *Creative Ministry*, Henri J.M. Nouwen paints a clearer picture of how this can be realized. Nouwen addresses the reality that pastoral care means more than pastoral worries. It means a careful and critical contemplation of man. Through this contemplation the pastor can take away the veil. Good and evil are not just words but visible realities in the life of every man. In this sense every pastoral contact is a challenge to understand in a new way God's work with man to distinguish with a growing sensitivity the light and darkness in the human heart. Nouwen brings clarity to the transition of being professional to becoming more spiritual as Means did concerning the transition of wounded healers to mighty prophets.<sup>12</sup>

Nouwen breaks down the transitional process as the minister searches for his professional identity. The minister moves from self-affirmation to self-denial. In the establishment of a professional relationship, he moves from contract to covenant, and in the professional approach to the needs of his fellowman he moves from role definition to

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey J. Means 2002. "Mighty prophet/wounded healer." *Journal Of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 56, no. 1: 41-49. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 5, 2014).

<sup>12</sup>Henri J.M. Nouwen "Creative Ministry" *Pastoral Theology* 1971) 63-64.

contemplation. Nouwen gives clear direction of becoming fully equipped by obtaining special information, special training and special skills in order to truly be helpful when coming in contact with people. A minister must break through the chains of this manipulative world and there has to be a move beyond professionalism through self-denial and contemplation to become a faithful witness of God's covenant. Nouwen reminds us that only Jesus can be called a pastor in this sense as Jesus cared for many people in their most individual needs. He cared for the woman at the well, for Mary Magdalene, for Nicodemus, and for the men traveling to Emmaus who felt their hearts burn when he talked with them.

Nouwen spoke about the skillfulness of Jesus concerning his relationships with people without being afraid to use his insight into the stirrings of the human heart. But when asked about the source of his knowledge, Jesus said in John 7:16-18, "My teachings are not of myself; it comes from the One who sent me. When a man's doctrine is his own, he is hoping to get honor for himself; but when he is working for the honor of one who sent him, then he is sincere and by no means an imposter." Nouwen finalizes his thought by reminding the minister that in order to care for people one has to be skillful but not a handyman, knowledgeable but not an imposter, and a professional but not a manipulator. When the minister is able to deny himself, to be faithful and to understand the meaning of human suffering, then the man who is cared for will discover that through the hands of those who want to be of help God shows his tender love for him. The information that Means and Nouwen have shared is a major step for the "healer" clergy to begin to understand their roles as pastors, but there are other pieces that come into play as clergy attempt to minister to the hurting souls in the congregation.

## Clergy and Community United

It has been established that domestic violence knows no boundaries, class, color, country or faith. It is prevalent around the globe and its presence in Christian homes cannot be denied. On the other hand, what is often denied is the role of the pastor in responding to those who look to their congregation for help when violence impacts their lives. In an article titled “Clergy referrals in the cases of domestic violence,” Clark-Kroeger and Nason-Clark emphatically want to impress upon the reader that it is imperative that religious leaders are aware of the nature and severity of abuse and the unique role in the journey towards justice, hope and healing for both the victims and offenders.<sup>13</sup>

It is stated that the reality of the matter is many clergy are ill-equipped for the task and are unable or unwilling to access community based resources for those who seek their assistance. Nason-Clark points out the mounting evidence that a coordinated community response to domestic violence offers the most hope to reduce abuse and bring safety to women and children who have been victimized by violence. To be sure, collaboration between churches and community agencies presents both challenges and opportunities.<sup>14</sup> This article gives clarity to the methods used to make referrals or not. It has been observed that clergy have different methods of referral techniques according to their knowledge and counseling or professional skills.

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<sup>13</sup>Nancy Nason-Clark, *Clergy Referrals in The Cases of Domestic Violence* (featured article 2004).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

Pastors with more extensive referral networks were far more able to outline the specific role of the pastoral counselor in a coordinated community response, likely in part, because they personally had been challenged by their own networking opportunities to think through their own uniqueness. These clergy also talked far more explicitly about the spiritual emphasis of their own counseling. On the other hand, those with limited experience were more reluctant to refer those individuals or couples who did seek their advice. The reality is that the referrals were most unlikely to occur where they were needed the most.<sup>15</sup>

According to the study done by Nason-Clark, Fisher-Townsend, Ruff, and Murphy on violence amongst religious families, there was an overwhelming majority (85%) of clergy in a sample report who stated that the demand for pastoral counseling has increased. While pastors regard counseling as one of the greatest stresses in their current work, only eight percent of religious leaders feel well equipped to respond to situations involving domestic violence. With the disclosure of this information there can be some serious ramifications concerning the referrals or lack of referrals for those who are seriously in need of help<sup>16</sup>

It is reinforced that domestic violence challenges the faith of some believers. Believers question the control of God in the Christian family and ask if God should be able to empower the believers to simply stop abusive behavior. In order to create a

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Clark, Kroeger, Nancy Nason-Clark, and Barbara Fisher-Townsend. 2008. *Beyond abuse in the Christian home: raising voices, Catherine Clark for change*. n.p.: 2008. ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost (accessed March 5, 2014).

cohesive, successful working network between clergy and community, some initial steps need to be taken: start to consult with other local clergy, contact local community mental health centers concerning classes for men arrested for domestic violence, and build community relationships with agencies and their professional staff. Learning from them will generate effectiveness and cultural sensitivity. In time this will provide opportunities for clergy to help the agencies to become more religious sensitive to clients of faith.

### Teaching Techniques

In her article “Use of the Arts in Teaching about Sexual and Domestic Abuse,” Mary Potter Engel introduces clergy to other effective ways to teach and instruct with creative methods of exposing domestic violence in the church. She informs the learner of the most important obstacle to be initially overcome and that is widespread denial, the “conspiracy of silence” that operates in our society. Engel realizes that many non-victims find it difficult to imagine, let alone believe, that such acts of horror could and do occur.<sup>17</sup>

Engel explains why many educators begin their presentations with recitations of statistics and frequently make use of video documentaries and testimonial literature (autobiographical accounts such as Maya Angelou’s *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, Francine Hughes and Faith McNulty’s *The Burning Bed*, and Ellen Bass and Louise Thornton’s *I Never Told Anyone: Writings by Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*).<sup>18</sup> Such materials help to break through the barrier of denial by confronting persons with the

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<sup>17</sup> Engel, Mary Potter. 1988. "Use of the arts in teaching about sexual and domestic abuse." *Annual Of The Society Of Christian Ethics* 257-261. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 5 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

reality in all its starkness and inviting them to empathize with and understand the victims. Engel makes use of these sources, but she relies more heavily on works of literary art, realizing that they are even more powerful tools of persuasion. She feels that by creating a contained yet open world into which persons can enter “for a while” artistic presentations of the realities of sexual and domestic abuse seem less threatening or risky than first-hand accounts. Using an art exhibit portraying one victim’s spiritual journey in recovery from child sexual abuse created a positive response.<sup>19</sup>

Engel found that for victims, both aware and those not completely aware, works of art helped to evoke responses that may have otherwise been buried and hard to identify and name. Class and workshop participants frequently commented that reading a novel or series of poems or viewing an art exhibit enabled them to understand and reconstruct their experience in liberating ways, thus proving as valuable to them as their work in therapy.<sup>20</sup> The selections of art that Engel found useful in this context were literary texts used in various methods, such as incorporating texts in lectures and sometimes assigning them as required reading to be responded to in journals, meditations, theological essays or class discussions.

Engel deliberately uses visual arts as much as literary art, even though the latter is much more readily available. Since literature is easier to ignore in a culture that empties words of their meaning, visual art often proves much more effective and efficient in opening persons up to thinking about sexual and domestic abuse. The impact of visual arts was experienced by a young lady who was intensely angry at the “incompetence” of

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

Alice Miller's argument against incest in her book *Thou Shalt not be Aware: Society's Betrayal of a Child* (particularly Miller's criticism of Freud's handling of his early incest data). In the latter instance, this young lady responded with belief and sorrow and began to talk with other students about the meaning of such events. In the first instance, she used her analytical skills not as tools to help understand but as defense to distance herself from these realities. Another student confessed that seeing *Christine on the Cross* (James Murphy's powerful sculpture of a woman bound and spread-eagle on an inverted cross) affected her far more powerfully than any essay she had ever read (and more than the celebrated *Christa*, a more traditional crucifix with a female figure). Try as she might standing before that figure, she could not evade the truth that she too was vulnerable to violation and violence simply because she is a woman in our sexist society. Instructors should anticipate the more intensely affective response these materials will undoubtedly call forth and be prepared to meet them responsibly.<sup>21</sup>

### Past vs. Present

A true sense of reality occurred when I had the opportunity to visit Ghana/Accra and the Wall of No Return. Women were captured in their own country and held captive prior to their transport to America. They were stripped and stretched by their arms and legs, left unclothed from early morning in the heat of the day until night's cold evening dew as punishment.<sup>22</sup> Remembering this experience brought back to mind Elaine Brown-Crawford's *A Hope in a Holler*. In retrospect, could there have been a holler in the slave

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Betty Spraggins: Trip to Accra/Ghana, Wall of No Return: conveyed by Tour Guide.

women? Did they have any hope as they resisted the daily physical torture of those who exerted power over them?

It was not enough to be abused by slave masters in the past but today many suffer abuse in the sanctity of the church. Crawford reminds us that it is not only the “hope” but the strength in the “holler” that has played a pivotal role in equipping women to overcome the legacy of abuse in church and society. African American women have been tolerable victims of society and the church. The hope that comes from the holler has enabled women to overcome the legacy of abuse that has been played mainly on African American women in the church and within the Mainstream of society for decades. It is important for our churches to debate the issue of domestic abuse and to develop understanding of the impact of domestic abuse on the lives of victims and their families.

By becoming an advocate, the church will be committing itself to undertake positive steps to provide information, support and pastoral care for those experiencing domestic violence.<sup>23</sup> The church will be making a public statement about its condemnation of domestic violence and its availability to offer information, care and support to those who are victims. As we take a final look at Christianity and the domestic violence experience, there is a reality that pastors and other religious professionals play a critical role in calling religious men to accountability and offering spiritual and practical support to women and children who have been victimized by male aggression in the family context.

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<sup>23</sup> Nancy Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 130.

Writers Fisher-Townsend, Nason-Clark, Murphy and Ruff reveal the results of the studies that have transpired over the years. The data has revealed several reasons why it is central to include religious leaders as part of any collaborative community response to domestic violence (Nason-Clark). The data includes the fact that religious leaders are chosen by some abusers and invested with moral authority. They are regarded as experts on marriage and the family and able to offer spiritual comfort and guidance. They are in regular contact with many who are marginalized by society and able to provide ongoing support after the crisis period is over. Moreover, religious leaders provide educational and other resources to all age groups and many clergy have access to men, women and children at the point of individual crisis. The church should understand domestic abuse to be the abuse of a person physically, sexually, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, socially or financially within an intimate or family-type relationship. It forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behavior.

The church should mandate that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and irreconcilable within the Christian faith and the Christian way of living. Most important, the church should:

1. Accept that domestic abuse is a serious problem which occurs in church families as well as in wider society.
2. Undertake to listen, support and care for those affected by domestic abuse.
3. Always place the safety of women and children as the highest priority.
4. Work with domestic abuse support agencies and learn from them and support them in appropriate ways by publicizing their work.
5. Teach that domestic abuse is a sin.
6. Believe in a God of love, justice, mercy, and forgiveness.
7. Teach what it means to be male and female, equally made in God's image.
8. Seek to appoint advisors to encourage the use of good practice guidelines.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The theological foundation of the project “Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church” will focus on the evidence of abuse in the church today. Domestic violence has been a part of the patriarchal cultural dominance of women for more than 5,000 years. Through the women’s movement of the 1960s and 70s in America, feminists and ethicists began to assess this serious problem, which has been largely ignored by male ethicists and theologians. Virtually everything we know theologically about domestic violence has been learned in the past 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Domestic violence is not a new reality but one that demands our attention as a moral and ethical problem and as a theological issue. According to Sue Heinemann, author of *Timelines of American Women’s History*, “Christian sexual ethics have not adequately addressed the male dominance in the male-female sexual relations.”<sup>2</sup>

Opinions concerning male-female dominance must be reviewed in order for this issue to be explored on a deeper level. Christian sexual ethics have not been adequately

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<sup>1</sup>Marie Fortune, a minister in the United Church of Christ and the Executive Director of The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, Seattle, Washington. She is the author of *'Love Does No Harm Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us*, and coeditor with Carol Adams of *Violence Against Women and Children A Christian Theological Force Book*.

<sup>2</sup>Sue Heinemann, *Timelines of American Women’s History* (New York, NY: A Roundtable Press Book/Perigee Book, 1996).3.

addressed concerning the male dominance in the male-female sexual relationships.<sup>3</sup> Society today is very confused when it comes to sex and the ethics that surround sex. Regrettably, the church has not adequately addressed the issue, adding more confusion to the problem. The meaning found in the Christian context has been fundamentally distorted. There is a God-focused meaning to sex, which provides a biblical ethic that effectively speaks to the many modern moral issues. The true biblical definition provides a good balance between open theologies and interesting discussion of the everyday concerns that Christians are facing.

### **Womanist Theology/Feminist Theology**

Is God not in Zion? The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold of me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?" (A version of Jeremiah 8:19-22).<sup>4</sup> The people were seeking healing and deliverance then as we are today. There was comfort in Gilead as there must be comfort today in our churches. Victims of domestic and sexual violence ought to be of particular interest and concern to the traditional church. Every abused person should be extended the ability to make sense of their experience as the abused and embraced as they seek consolation in the church today.<sup>5</sup> As a victim/ victor, the writer realizes that without comfort, without counsel and without Christ there is no deliverance from the guilt, the torture, and the

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<sup>4</sup>Jeremiah 8:19-22 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup>Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 10-11.

turmoil of abuse. There is a profound impact that goes deeper than anyone could possibly imagine, and it is not easily erased. As the research on this project begins, it is evident that several theologians believe that the church must take a strong role in the attempt to bring greater awareness to this epidemic against women who need the love and support of their Christian brothers and sisters.

Delores S. Williams, professor of theology and culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, takes issue with the relaxed use of these words: love, justice, and righteousness, which are easily proclaimed, but what do they mean in relation to the issues facing the Christian church today? Williams argues that feminist, womanist, and Mujeristic women (white, black, and Latina) are challenging the church to act on the behalf of women's empowerment. They are asking the church to rid itself of the oppressive ecclesiastical structures and Christian doctrines holding women in subordinate and often abusive positions.<sup>6</sup> Williams' defense is that women should be acknowledged as partners, not subordinates. Del Martin expresses concern about this issue in her book titled *Battered Wives*. Martin conveys in her writings that throughout the world domestic violence against women is rampant.

Ninety-five percent of domestic violence acts in the United States are against women. Feminist theology plays an important role in the United States<sup>7</sup>. These women theologian are calling the church to re-evaluate their theology and how they interpret the bible and their Christian traditions. It is very important that we have the correct information since Christianity has contributed to the support of a male-controlled structure in society. Martin emphasizes the importance of how the proper information can help create safe environments free from

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<sup>6</sup>Delores S. Williams Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Her most recent book is *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God talk* Article from Living Pulpit (October-December 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Del Martin *Battered Wives* (New York: Pocket Books: Sage Publications 1976).

discrimination against women in the church and society. When the church begins to embrace the accurate interpretations of the bible then we can begin to move toward the empowerment of women.<sup>8</sup> Many women question if there is a possibility of being able to speak out concerning gender equality and still have a place in the church. The real question is how this prevalent issue can continue in the church without the church knowing what God is really saying in his word concerning this matter. As spousal abuse becomes increasingly known and understood in the American culture, general authorities respond with sharp condemnation. Equality between marriage partners is the paradigm in doctrine and spousal abuse is clearly viewed as sin. The abuse entry on Gospel topics listed on many churches' web pages features topics such as "*Educating Pastors about Domestic Violence*" states that abuse is in total opposition to the teaching of the savior. The Lord condemns abusive behavior in any form-physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional.<sup>9</sup>

In the process of this research it is found that there are many theologians who share the same concern about domestic violence. In this paper I can only expound on a few of the theologians who have also made the decision to "cry aloud and spare not" in their discussions concerning these assessments. Society is aware of the problems of discrimination against women and sexism; nevertheless, discrimination and sexism are present in society on many different levels. Several organizations such as Domestic Violence Network (DVN), Women of Color Coalition (WOCC), and CHOICES, work on increasing public awareness about domestic violence. Shelters, women's agencies, state coalitions, police departments, and churches provide help for women as they work toward social change.

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<sup>8</sup>Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (New York: Pocket Books: Sage Publications 1976).

<sup>9</sup>*Gospel Topics, Abuse*, (assessed March 13, 2013). <https://www.Ids.org/topics/abuse/language>

## The Churches Role/ Pastoral Care

In an article titled “911: *A Pastoral Theological Reflection on Family Violence Advocacy*”, pastoral theologian Stephanie M. Crumpton shares her theological reflections on 911 calls that she receives as an advocate for women in crisis. Crumpton is a religious scholar and a family violence advocate for the Georgia court system. Crumpton has a major concern for women suffering from violence and their relationships with religious leaders. Crumpton states that she has trained leaders from various faith traditions on criminal justice procedures, the dynamics on intimate partner violence, and theological perspectives on partner abuse. The last element of her work, which she calls the God question, presses into my conscious the most. As I remember the experience of being a victim while being a Christian. Neither the law nor the church came to my rescue.

Each day I am challenged to think through justice and accountability as very real theological tenets that bind community together but that often put religious leaders at odds with themselves and their communities. I have found that religious leaders are often woefully ignorant of the dynamics of intimate violence and abusive relationships. Additionally they are often reluctant to acknowledge intimate violence as both sin and crime. Judges often lament how rarely if ever the leaders of temples, churches and mosques show up in court to support the identified victim. Rather they usually come to vouch for the person<sup>10</sup> Crumpton also points out that religious leaders often side with the

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<sup>10</sup>Crumpton, SM 2013, ‘*After the 911 call: A Pastoral Theologian Reflects on Family Violence Advocacy*’, *Cross Currents*, 63, 2, pp. 131-137, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost, viewed 20 August 2014.

abuser and fail to acknowledge his transgressions: that has been arrested for the abusive behavior. This is especially the case when the defendant is male. The impact is that the victim receives the message that their faith community is less concerned with wrong doing in the community and more concerned with conferring cheap grace by focusing on getting violators off the hook.<sup>11</sup>

Crumpton reiterates how great her theological concern is pertaining to this matter. It is in this place that Crumpton and the researcher strongly connect in the desire to work harder in developing relationships with clergy who can come together and embody justice through advocacy for victims and accountability for those who use violence. Crumpton's God question, which is also the researcher's question, asks what God has said concerning domestic violence and what is God's mandate for protecting battered women and punishing their abusers? As Crumpton addresses domestic abuse she expresses, "I have found solace in grounding myself in the belief that the power of Jesus' death on the cross does not lie in the power of Jesus' suffering at the hands of others, but rather in the power of God to raise life out of death dealing circumstances."<sup>12</sup>

### **Broken Pieces**

In an article by Marie Fortune titled *Picking up the Broken Pieces*, the beginning statement speaks volumes to the very prevalent situation that centers on domestic violence and the focus of this thesis, which is the fact that "the church does not believe that women have the right to be free from bodily harm and that men who abuse women

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

should be held accountable in and out of the church <sup>13</sup>be free from Bodily Harm and that men who abuse women should be held accountable in and out of the church.”<sup>14</sup> Fortune offers new insights and assesses the progress of religious people and the challenges that are faced: Physical violence in our society against our women is endemic.

It is absolutely necessary that the issue of violence come before the church for two reasons, the first is pastoral. Our people are hurting, families and individuals are being destroyed by violence. Children are growing up believing that daddy hitting mommy is just the way things are. Many women live with fact that home is sometimes the most dangerous place to be. People need to know that they can come to their church for support and information and when they come they need to find church leaders available to assist them. The second is Pragmatic, the issues of violence against women should be one of the priorities of a peacemaking agenda because it is a social issue which is personal and immediate in our lives. The fact that women and girls in our culture learn early that we have no right to bodily integrity, that we have no right to be free from bodily harm is a fact that has been long accepted as normal.<sup>15</sup>

The church in its silence has been and continues to be complicit in this reality for women and is often the source for justification. We’ve been good on other violent issues such as capital punishment, nuclear proliferation, gang violence, and non-violence used as political strategy.

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<sup>14</sup>, M. M Fortune. (1995). *Picking Up the Broken Pieces: Responding to Domestic Violence. Church & Society*, 85(3), 36-47. (January 1, 1995): 36-47. ATLASerials, Religion Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed November 20, 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 7.

Fortune goes on to say that until fifteen years ago there was virtually nothing in theology, biblical studies, pastoral care or ethics that mentioned rape, battering, incest or other forms of sexual and domestic violence. Fortune uses the film *Schindler's List* as an illustration to understand the dynamics of personal violence within its institutional context: The commandant of the camp where the Jews were held was a batterer. He had power over the Jews and he used violence and the threat of violence to control their behavior whether in the camp or in his own household. His control was arbitrary usually well thought out, intentional, not the result of the loss of his temper. It worked very well to keep the camp under his control, he used violence with impunity.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the commander was not accountable to anyone and was able to control the Jews reminds me of the batterer and his ability to control the wife through the same concept. At any time on a whim the batterer/abuser can go off and begin his abuse. Fortune asks what we are going to do in this present time to address an age old epidemic of manipulation and control. Domestic abuse is an everyday occurrence, but now it is very prevalent in the media. Recent incidents such as former Baltimore Ravens' running back Ray Rice punching his then-fiancée Janay Palmer at Revel Casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey have been highly publicized. The media are more concerned and attentive than ever. Churches are also speaking out. In light of the Rice incident many more are seeking education concerning domestic violence.

The eventual response to the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson is a case in point. The media made a connection between the history of O.J. Simpson's battering and the murder of his wife (which is public record) and the possibility that he murdered her. Hence there has been intensive investigating on issues of battered women ever since. As

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 12.

a result of this information, the church can no longer ignore the fact that domestic violence is a problem. Fortune states that the Catholic church of Canada has stated that the church must take responsibility for the abuse of women when they have directed battered women to stay in abusive relationships and taught women to be subordinate in marriage. Perhaps we are beginning to understand that the church is a part of the problem and that the church has contributed mightily to the context that long has tolerated the abuse of women.

### **Advocacy for Women**

Being a Christian woman living in this very atmosphere, I have questioned when is the church going to become a part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I have questioned the scriptures, God and the church. When the scripture says, “Wives submit to your husbands and obey them,” should women obey and submit to beatings, manipulation and control? When God has said you are equal in relationship and all you see is domination by whom many have called “the head of the house,” these very words speak volumes as it puts women in an entirely different category in their minds while they attempt to function in their homes. Theology engaged with human experience can move us toward understanding who we are and who God is in us.

Seminaries, churches, women’s shelters, or clinical pastoral education conferences are places where ministers learn to reflect theologically on human experiences and very often human experiences in crisis. Reflecting on domestic violence in general can bring numerous themes to discussion. Domestic violence has various undercurrents such as substance abuse, pathology,

and low self-esteem. Feminist theologian Pamela Cooper-White wrote several works on domestic violence issues, including a manual for women who are dealing with past and present abusive relationships.<sup>17</sup> In *Shared Wisdom* Cooper -White presents the relational paradigm and the idea of relational theorist-the use of the term “asymmetry” (power for) instead of hierarchy (power over).<sup>18</sup> She uses this paradigm for the interpretation of the relationship between the partner and the helpmeet. She argues that during pastoral care and counseling there is a difference between partner and helpmeet.

There is power in the helping role, and when it is exercised faithfully it is exercised in the sense of “power for” and not “power over.” Cooper-White uses this hypothesis for the analysis of the relationship between the partner and the helpmate. She contends that there is a difference between pastoral care and counseling.<sup>19</sup> Pastoral care is evaluated from a Christian, biblical standpoint whereas the counselor functions from a professional standpoint.

What is clergy’s understanding of marriage? How many churches misinterpret what God’s intention of marriage is to be as a life-giving relationship, a relationship of equal and mutual love? Marriage is an interpenetration between the husband and wife without destroying each other’s boundaries. Cooper-White talks about negative aspects of the

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<sup>17</sup> Cooper-White, Pamela, *Woman Healing & Empowerment*, Chicago: (ELCA, 1996) *Cry of Tamar, Violence against Women and The Churches Response* .( Minneapolis: Fortress Press: 1995: Wheel of Fear, Wheel of Power: 125

<sup>18</sup> Cooper-White, Pamela, *Shared Wisdom. Use The Self in Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Minnesota Fortress 2004) pp.58-60.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 10.

hierarchy and that it is dangerous to promote power-over in general. Hierarchy in intimate relationships brings a theological dynamic related to domestic violence.

Cooper-White reminds us that abusers as well as victims fail to recognize that they are created in the image of God and worthy in God's eyes. From case studies it is shown that the misinterpretation of the doctrine of the image of God can lead to violating the boundaries between intimate partners, creation and God. Misinterpretations can cause the blaming of others or self, self-centeredness or self-denial, and depreciation of others and one's life. Many victims of abuse (women) often show characteristics of self-denial, which have led them to sacrifice their own need for the sake of the relationship.<sup>20</sup> Domestic violence consists of many overlapping issues that create a theme of self-sacrifice which can lead to co-dependency, which is a major part in abusive relationships.

### **Christology –What Does God Say?**

The perversion of God's word gives a wrong conception of where God stands concerning the roles in marriage. Research accompanied with life experience brings forth the realization that very often abusers attack their victims in order to protect their feelings of omnipotence and overcome their insecurity. Abusers' violent acts uncover their failure to trust God and to realize that God is active in their lives. The abusers think about God's activity in humans' lives in terms of their limited understanding that God uses abusive power to control the world. Therefore, in the abusers' minds, God uses coercive power to control the world, and the abusers use the same power to control their

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<sup>20</sup>Pamela Cooper-White *An Emperor Without Clothes: The Church's View About the Treatment of Domestic Violence* "Pastoral Psychology," (Vol. 45, no. 1 September 1996). 5

wives/partners.<sup>21</sup> Carol Shlueter, author of an article titled *Creating a New Reality*, shares her thoughts concerning domestic violence being the number one health threat to women. Shlueter states that domestic violence survivors are valiant women not only because they have broken free from literally being beaten down but because they call the church to create realities where domestic violence will not happen. Survivors' stories are rarely known. In opening ourselves to their accounts we can raise our consciousness to the prevalence of domestic violence and learn how to make a Christian response.<sup>22</sup>

Most churches acknowledge today that roles for men and women are changing. It is important that churches are deliberate in their effort to create an atmosphere of mutuality. Increased efforts must be made to enhance a woman's self-esteem so that she can see herself as a valuable daughter of God who is cherished and gifted, and whose views, thoughts and feelings matter in decision making. The church can also help to create an atmosphere where men and women are valued and encouraged to be supportive of each other, where both can speak concerning their own needs, be heard and attended to if possible, and use their gifts in leadership for the furthering of the gospel. Men and women can work to eliminate sex role stereotyping in the church, where both are expected to take responsibility for their behavior.<sup>23</sup>

There is a problem that comes directly from Christian tradition and scripture in understanding God's power and control over our lives. Reading from the Bible interpretation of Mary Shields on Ezekiel 23, in ancient times the authors of scripture

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>22</sup> Carol Shlueter 1996. "Creating a New Reality: No More Domestic Violence. "Currents In Theology And Mission (23, no. 4: 254-264. ATLA Religion Database, EBSCOhost).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

depict God as a male with intimidating power who abuses and punishes Israel who is depicted as a female. These images are dangerous to our understanding of God, humanity and our relationships with God and each other.<sup>24</sup> Our understanding of God and humanity should not encourage violence but love.

The abusive image of God has been inherited by modern society and continues to influence the domestic violence situation. Abusers do not differentiate between who is created and who is the creator. The abusers are trying to do something which is against their natures. They are not supposed to control the universe though their wives/partners. They are not God but creation. God uses relational power. God gives us love in God's son Jesus Christ, who was not a warrior or an abuser of the defenseless ones. Christ was incarnated in order to be on the side of the defenseless and to be vulnerable himself.

There are several problems with this kind of interpretation of God's relationship to creation. When an abuser uses power over his wife/partner, he uses negative aspects of hierarchy which is patriarchy. In other words, he thinks that men who rule over women reflect divine order. In this person's mind there is a failure to understand that in intimate relationships there should be equality not domination. Levels of rank should not exist in intimate relationships. Relationships should be reciprocal, esteeming others higher than you.

God created us with a free will, so why it is that women succumb to the bondage of men? Estrangement from God can cause us to behave in different ways, resulting in feelings of sinfulness. Sinfulness causes emotional unsettledness that allows outside

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<sup>24</sup>Mary Shields , *An Abusive God? Identity and Power/Gender and Violence in Ezekiel 23*" Ed. A. K .M. Adam. (Post Modern Interpretation of the Bible St. Louis Missouri, Chalice Press 2001), 129-151.

influence to convince us that we are nothing. We become ashamed of who we are, and we don't care what happens next. Some people take drugs and live in shame because that is all they know to do. Most of the time the abuser doesn't want the victim to think clearly. The more distorted the thoughts, the more dependent the victim becomes. Without God there is no sense of completeness because sin creates distorted relationships.

### **Ecclesiology /The Role of the Church**

Joy Schroeder, professor of church history at Trinity Lutheran Episcopal Seminary reminds us that women have been attacked by the evil of violence since ancient times, which was depicted in the scriptures and other literature. Evil and Satan do not have power without human participation; therefore, when the abuser makes wrong decisions sin empowers evil. God's law can be helpful theological reflection regarding the sin of domestic violence because humans' sinfulness can be identified with the use of God's law.<sup>25</sup>

Being in abusive relationships, women glorify and accept self-sacrifice. Victims of abuse have low self-esteem, minimize violence, blame themselves, and ignore their own needs. This can be a sign of co-dependence which could also involve the abuser. He can also be co-dependent. This is induced through control and domination over one another. Partners that cannot imagine their lives without these relationships can be defined as co-dependent. There is a consensus among womanist theologian concerning

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<sup>25</sup> Joy Schroeder, Professor, professor of church history at Trinity Lutheran Episcopal Seminary: "The Woman and The Dragon: Feminist Reflections on Sexual Violence, Evil and Bodily Resurrection" (Dialog Vol. 33 no. 2 Spring 1994), 135-142.

women who have suffered tremendously as they have been thrust into abusive domination. Research of this subject has revealed that for many years women have been downplayed in the Christian church as if they are less than their male counterparts.

The irony of this thought is without women there would not be a church. According to Sharon Bowland, assistant professor of pastoral care at the University of Louisville in Kentucky, "Pastoral work with survivors of domestic violence may reveal theological struggles, understanding of scriptures that reinforce a sense of powerlessness and alienation from God may contribute to an impaired relationship and limit resources for healing."<sup>26</sup> Bowland extends her comments to the marginalization of women in the church and the fact that they were and in many instances still are relegated to the most meager positions in the church: Sunday school teachers, nursery caregivers, cooks, ushers, and funeral nurses. Women are still not allowed in the pulpits of many churches. Bowland's theme emphasizes the need for greater pastoral involvement. She takes reference from A.J. Weaver's report *What Pastors Need to Know*. In Weaver's dialogues he reinforces his belief that domestic violence should be the number one pastoral care emergency.

While many questions are asked by the abused, the response to these questions does not seem to be of importance to the church. According to Weaver's research, 76% of today's population is Christian and a major portion of this percentage is involved in some type of domestic abuse. Christians are experiencing abuse at an alarming rate, and they are looking to clergy to help mend the broken pieces. In pursuit of help, Christians

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<sup>26</sup> Sharon Bowland: 2011. "Process theology's relevance for older survivors of domestic violence." *Journal Of Pastoral Care & Counseling (Online)* 65, no. 3: ATLA Religion Database, EBSCO host (accessed November 27, 2013).

want to know what the belief of the clergy/church is. How does the belief of clergy function in the life of the trauma survivors while facilitating the healing process?

Personal violations may lead to spiritual crisis when survivors question God's role in the trauma. How many survivors have asked the question what did I do to deserve this? Why did God allow this to happen to me? What does obey really mean? Without the support of the church many questions go unanswered. Many times clergy are blamed for the subservience of women, which may seem to converge with the word of God but is not necessarily the truth. Delores Williams helps us to understand that theology means a study of a community's way of talking about God's relationship to the world the community inhabits. Williams informs us that theology for women uses women's images, stories, and language to reveal the way in which God champions women's call and activity for justice. This kind of theology must be informed by scriptural messages that emphasize equal justice across gender lines.

We are reminded that this is also a theology of advocacy for women, which lifts up both political unity among women and spirituality as significant goals of a Christian community. Women's talk about God and knowledge of God often manifests itself in female forms. These forms must be given the sacred status that they deserve. A theology of advocacy for women wages a war on poverty that afflicts women's economic and spiritual lives. A theology advocacy for women courageously affirms the power and necessity of female leadership in church and society.<sup>27</sup> Domestic violence is a sinful act against God. We know that God is merciful and full of grace, but this does not justify the sin that is committed against God and man/woman. We know that grace gives us the

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<sup>27</sup> Delores Williams: Professor of Theology at Union Theological Seminary (New York City) Chairman of the board of the Green Project. *This Article is adapted from one of her sermons to the women's advocacy conference for Economic Justice in March 2000.*

opportunity to step out of sinful behavior and move into repentance and restraint.

Although this is impossible to those who refuse to believe that they are performing sinful acts, God created men to be in communion with God, each other, and themselves.

We are informed and frequently reminded that God created the world with balance and harmony, although harmony and balance was lost through sin. Sin has ruled and reigned and continues through the acts of violence, violence that places a hierarchy of men over women. The patriarchs of this world have sent the wrong message to the women in their lives. Should women really suffer for the sake of their mates? Emotional attachment would be understandable only if there was a command which required the suppression of emotion, forbidding one to serve God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” We are told to ask not only for “works” for actions, but above all for love, awe and reverence. We are called upon to “wash” our hearts (Jeremiah 4:14) to remove “the foreskin” of the heart (Jeremiah 4:4), to return with the whole heart (Jeremiah 3:10), and to seek the Lord with all “thine heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). The new covenant which the Lord will make with the house of Israel will be written upon their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).<sup>28</sup>

### **Challenging the Custom**

Vashti McKenzie asks three questions in chapter eight of her book *Not without a Struggle*: what does it take to break through ordinary patterns of living to challenge the cultural pecking order that in many ways may be unfair, oppressive or unjust, (2) what does it take to

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<sup>28</sup>Susan Forward, *Obsessive Love, Women Who Hate Women, Women Who Love Them: Emotional Blackmail*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers 1997), 3.

grow beyond personal limitations to reach your goals, and (3) what does it take to rise above dashers, hope snatchers, flame throwers, haters and intimidators to remain focused on the future?<sup>29</sup> The pecking order has caused the church to be callous, while turning a blind eye to what is obvious.<sup>30</sup> Are we so concerned about the pecking order that we refuse to see the need for change, the need for awareness of violence in the church?

What about the man that wears the collar on Sunday and abuses his wife on Monday? This concern is also expressed in Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark's book *No Place for Abuse*. They call abuse in the church "sacred silence" because it has been sacrificed to silence. It is stated in the book that "a pastor who had been secretly abusing his wife for many years caused the congregation to be thrown into a whirlwind when the wife refused to suffer in silence any longer and eventually left the church.

The question is who is to blame for this humiliation? Was it the elders who could have been more sensitive to the needs of the family and their plight? Could it have been the seminary where this pastor received his training or the denomination that ordained him? It could have been the congregation that had grown to appreciate this family and the ministry and just looked the other way. Ultimately the blame is widespread for

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<sup>29</sup>Vashti McKenzie, *Not without a Struggle*( Pilgrim Press 1996.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

Christian believers worldwide who tend to ignore, minimize and deny the abuse that is rampant in families of faith. Churches provide few resources for victims of abuse.<sup>31</sup>

When will the church realize that this issue is more important than any anniversary, revival, conference or many of the other social events that are on the annual schedule? If the men and women of God are not in the business of healing, they are in the business of hurting those that need their help the most. Family violence is not consigned to the confines of one's home. It spills into every aspect of a person's life, which includes the church. Many attempts are made to camouflage the evidence of abuse. Women step into the church every week as though they have it all together. A abused women camouflage their pain with painted faces to hide the agony that they don't want anyone else to see. Susan Forward, a psychologist and author, describes domestic violence as any behavior that is intended to subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation and verbal or physical assaults.<sup>32</sup>

Howard Thurman writes in his book *Jesus and the Disinherited* that fear is one of the most persistent hounds of hell that dog the poor, the disinherited, and the dispossessed. He states that "there is nothing new or recent about fear, it is as old as the life of man on this planet."<sup>33</sup> The word must be incorporated with real life issues and not presumptions. As prophets, preachers, teachers, missionaries, lay persons, elders, and deacons that profess and proclaim the word of God, we must do as 2 Timothy 2:15 says, study to show ourselves approved, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing

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<sup>31</sup>Catherine Clark Kroeger, *No Place for Abuse Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence* (Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, )99.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>33</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. (Beacon Press 1996), 36.

the word of truth. Once we have rightly divided the truth, then it can be applied to the body of Christ in the way that God intended it to be. In *No Place for Abuse*, Catherine Kroeger speaks about a “Holy Hush” that pervades religious organizations. She describes the Holy Hush as the silence of our churches and leaders that is often interpreted in the public square as complicity with violent acts. Where are God’s people who are called by his name to bring healing in the midst of suffering? They are quiet, very quiet, and so quiet that we don’t know if they understand that violence is ugly. Most churches and their leaders feel uncomfortable talking about violence and are ill-equipped to respond to its victims.

The issue is very sensitive and many people and pastors alike would prefer to sweep it under the proverbial carpet. Moreover, violence touches many people at the core of their being, because they either recognize in themselves the tendency to control others or have suffered humiliation at the hands of someone else. Kroeger encourages the church to face this reluctance head on. As the people of God, we would prefer to think abuse does not occur in our church families. So we act as if it were someone else’s problem and something we do not need to contend with. But Kroeger reminds us that violence is everyone’s problem and that it is not going away. It is prevalent in our churches and in our communities.<sup>34</sup>

Reflecting on the words of Samuel Proctor, out of his book, *How Shall They Hear?* A verse taken from Romans 10 vs. 14. “How then can they call on the one they have not believed in and how can they believe in him if they have never heard of him”. To hear of God is to hear of the love of God, the concern of God. We are told in the

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<sup>34</sup> Catherine Clark Kroeger, *No Place for Abuse* (Inter-Varsity Press2001),15.

scriptures that God came to save those that are lost, reminding all that God cares about everything that concerns us. Because God cares, the mantle has been passed onto the prophet, the preacher, the teacher and the pastor. As ambassadors of God there is a call to bring spiritual renewal and a moral wholeness to those that feel as though they have been forgotten. Domestic Violence has been forgotten because it has not been accepted in the church as a viable subject. When a subject is avoided so are the people that are affected by the subject. In order to become the total church, an embracing community the church must be open to every dysfunctional element of life. My understanding of Abraham J. Heschel quote from his book *The Prophets*:

While we are focusing on the frivolous elements of life let's get down to the business at hand, healing the hopeless Instead of dealing with the timeless issues of being and becoming, of matter and form, of definitions and demonstrations, the prophet is thrown into orations about widows and orphans, about the corruptions of judges and affairs of the marketplace. Instead of showing a way through the elegant mansions of the mind the Prophets takes us to the slums. To us a single act of injustice, cheating in business, exploration of the poor is a slight: to the prophets, a disaster. To us injustice is injuries to the welfare of the people, to the prophet it is a deathblow to existence, to us an episode, to them, a catastrophe, a threat to the world. The breathless impatience of the injustice may strike us as hysteria. We ourselves witness continually acts of injustice, manifestations of Hypocrisy, falsehood, outrage, misery, but we rarely grow indignant or overly excited. To a prophet even a minor injustice assumes cosmic proportions.<sup>35</sup>

The prophet's words are outburst of violent emotions. His rebuke is harsh and relentless. But if such deep sensitivity to evil is to be called hysterical what name should be given to the abysmal indifference to evil which the prophet bewails? The niggardliness of our moral comprehensions, the incapacity to sense the depth of misery

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<sup>35</sup> Abraham J. Heschel: *THE PROPHETS*: (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishing Inc, 1962)

caused by our own failures is a fact of which no subterfuge can elude.<sup>36</sup> If we are insensitive to the evil are we really prophets of God. There appears to be an insensitivity to violence in the church. Every prophet should have a level of righteous indignation when it comes to injustice in our communities. We are called to be words in action, not pacifist. According to James: 2:14-26, “Faith without works is dead.<sup>14</sup> what *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food,<sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?”

Prophets should be instrumental partners and associates of God. Emotional attachment would be understandable only if there were a command that required the suppression of emotion, forbidding one to serve God “with all your heart with all your soul, with all your might.” We are told to ask not only for “works” for actions, but above all for love, awe and fear. We are called upon to “wash” our hearts (Jeremiah 4:14), to remove “the foreskin” of the heart (Jeremiah 4:4), and to return with the whole heart (Jeremiah 3:10). Jeremiah 29:13 says, “You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all thine heart,” and Jeremiah 31:31-34 affirms that “the new covenant which the Lord will make with the house of Israel will be written upon their hearts.”<sup>37</sup>

The prophet must stare the demons of violence in the face and push for change in our churches, synagogues, mosques, and all other venues that are representative of honesty and truth. The more I explore domestic violence, the more confused I become as

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

to why it is so offensive to the church. As ambassadors/prophets, why is the task of addressing abuse so difficult?

When will the church realize that the issue of domestic violence is more important than any anniversary, revival, conference or many of the other social events for which we find time? If the men and women of God are not in the business of healing, we are hurting those that need our help the most. Family violence is not concentrated within the confines of one's home. It spills into every aspect of a person's life, which includes the church. Many attempts are made to camouflage the evidence of abuse. Women step into the church every week as though they have it all together. They are dressed as though they just stepped out of a fashion magazine.

What others don't realize is that this is combat gear, gear to combat the tears and the hurt. Combat gear disguises the pain with painted faces to hide the agony abused women do not want anyone to see. Susan Forward, a psychologist and author of *Spotlight on Domestic Violence*, describes domestic violence as any behavior that is intended to subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation and verbal or physical assaults. She reminds us that all wounds are not visible<sup>38</sup>. Just because a person is not beaten or bruised doesn't mean that abuse does not exist. For example, blackmail, manipulation and intimidation are forms of emotional abuse.

In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Howard Thurman writes that "fear is one of the most persistent hounds of hell that dog the poor, the disinherited, and the dispossessed ... there is nothing new or recent about fear, it is as old as the life of man on this planet.

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<sup>38</sup>Susan Forward, Psychologist, Author: *Obsessive Love, Women Who Hate Women, Women Who Love Them: Emotional Blackmail*: (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997)

2 Timothy 1: 7 tells us that God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind<sup>39</sup>. However, if the church is not rightly dividing the word of truth concerning the authority that God has given to his people many will continuously walk and live in fear. The church has contributed to the fear and the inability to escape this growing epidemic. Why shouldn't the church work just as hard to be a contributor to the solution?<sup>40</sup> Many women are not just fearful of their partners but are also afraid to step out and expose the epidemic that plagues their lives. The question of many women is will I still be accepted in the church if I speak out about masculinity and sexism? The church has a very strong impact on society. If the church would get involved and use its influence to address social injustice issues (domestic violence) and support the women who sit in the congregation silently hurting while needing an inner healing, a major change could take place. Unfortunately all congregations are not ready to develop a new approach and deviate from the systematic norm in the state of families. This stance creates a sense of discrimination against women and domestic violence.

Samuel J. Proctor makes a profound statement when he says that God is not only present but one who participates. Dr. Cummings takes it a step further as he ushered us into the preached word concerning the supreme celebration of God which is conveyed in Psalm 21:1-5 “The earth’s is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof ....”

This presence is seen in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. It is observed with the sons and daughters shouted for joy at the creation. It is seen in Jacob, who awakening from his dream would declare, “Surely, God is in this place and I knew it not. This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. This presence is

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<sup>39</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976), 13.

seen in "God caring enough to come into our midst in the life of a carpenter's son, among ordinary people in the fullness of time, to share this earthbound abode with us, to taste our existence, our hurt, our pain, and the limitation that we endure, even the chilly hand of death and, then, to open wide the gates of heaven through the marvelous victory of Christ over death and the grave. God is with us in all of the ebb and flow of our days."<sup>41</sup>

As we open our bibles to seek the truth and open our hearts for this word to become a live can only our hearts be changed. These words should leave us with a great desire to be more like Christ. to become wrapped up, and tangled up in ministry like never before. The church should have a greater hunger and thirst to right every wrong and heal every hurt. There must be an urgency to extend our hand to the lost and rejected souls that enter and exit the church every Sunday more injured than when they walked in the door. God wants to be incorporated in every element of our lives and as we love as Christ loves that should be the desires of our hearts. As I think about the woman with the Alabaster Box, being misunderstood, ostracized, talked about, I am reminded of every woman that has been beaten and bruised, lied on and misunderstood, for this cause I declare that I have no choice but to pursue the eradication of ignorance in the church concerning domestic violence.

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<sup>41</sup> Samuel J. Proctor, *How Shall I Hear?* 31

## BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

### OLD TESTAMENT

Denise George shares the result of her research on domestic violence in her book, *What Women Wish Pastors Knew* concerning the ignorance of the pastors in the church. She speaks about the tragedy that was revealed surrounding spousal abuse, understanding that it is just as common within the evangelical churches as anywhere else. George states, "This means that about 25 percent of Christian homes witness abuse of some kind. She shares her shock to numbers within the studies that were done."<sup>42</sup> George explains that the researchers were not secular or hostile to the church. She gave reassurance with sadness that they were not. George writes. "We just cannot believe that a church deacon or member goes home after worship and beats his wife." Tragically, however, George notes, some of these men justify their violence "by citing biblical passages."<sup>43</sup>

The scriptural reinforcement for the solution to the reality of domestic violence in the church lies in the accuracy of God's word. Biblical truths that focus on the occurrences of social justice issues is needed in the Church today. How do we change the way the church reacts to domestic violence if we don't know what the Bible says about it? Misreading of the scriptures encourage victims to continue in a level of victimization. As an active participant in a Christian Domestic Violence organization each member is committed to establish greater awareness and security in the church for

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<sup>42</sup> Denise George, *What Women Wish Pastors Knew* "Subordination of Women and Domestic Violence", Rutgers L. Rev. 51 (1998): 1207

<sup>43</sup> Denise George, *What Women Wish Pastors Knew* "Subordination of Women and Domestic Violence", Rutgers L. Rev. 51 (1998): 1207

women and their children. Writing this paper allows me to combine biblical issues on domestic violence from the Old Testament scripture, 2 Samuel 13:11-15 and New Testament scripture Ephesians 5:21-25. The biblical study requires both quantitative and qualitative research. In the process of researching the scriptures, all interpretations are not adequate. We can no longer speculate or give into our own private interpretations of what God's word is saying to the prophet.

Tyndale old testament commentary states "that we need to understand better the religious vision of the bible that is given depth precisely, subtlety by being conveyed through the most sophisticated resources of prose fiction. The biblical tale through the most rigorous economy of means leads us again and again to ponder complexities of motives and ambiguities of character because these are essential aspects of its vision of man created by God, enjoying or suffering all the consequences of human freedom."<sup>44</sup> As a culture we may read the bible according to our own level of comprehension but there is a greater depth to what we read and how we process it in our limited understanding. A good place for understanding to begin is with the overall focus of the book of Samuel. 2 Samuel 13:11-15: tells the story of the rape of Tamar by her brother Amnon. When she had brought *them* to him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister."<sup>12</sup> But she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing!"<sup>13</sup> And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you."

<sup>14</sup> However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and

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<sup>44</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*: (Downers Grove Illinois: (Inter Varsity Press 1988)

lay with her.<sup>15</sup> Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone!”<sup>16</sup> So she said to him, “No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me.” But he would not listen to her<sup>45</sup>

### Background of 2 Samuel

2 Samuel 13:1-19 reveals the inappropriate leadership displayed by King David as he ignores his oldest son Amnon’s sinful behavior concerning his only daughter Tamar. These chapters clearly reveal the misrepresentation of justice and righteousness during David’s reign. The author presents several occurrences to justify this perspective; the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon, David’s refusal to punish Amnon for this incestuous rape. David’s prolonged refusal to acknowledge the injustice of Absalom in executing Amnon. Absalom’s usurpation of the king’s throne, and the wicked use of wisdom by Jonadab and Ahithophel to aid in the rape of Tamar. Absalom’s appropriation of David’s concubines, and David’s order to deal gently with Absalom during the battle in the forest of Ephraim<sup>46</sup>

Because our society is too familiar with sexual abuse and violent crime, we are liable to miss a deeper meaning of the passage. The story is not just about atrocities supposedly committed within the royal family; more broadly, it probes the ambiguities in

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<sup>45</sup> Unless otherwise noted all scripture references are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), 2 Samuel 13:1-25

<sup>46</sup> Richard G. Smith: *The Fate of Justice and Righteousness During David’s Reign, Narrative Ethics and Rereading the Court History According to 2 Samuel 8:16 -20:26. P146.* (T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies 2009)

the network of obligation and taboo that defines Israelite kinship not as a theoretical exercise, but to make a theological point. Although the actors bear their own culpability, the author's implication is that the unseen Deity is manipulating them in order to present David with excruciating dilemmas, punishment for his behavior in the affair of Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 11-12).<sup>47</sup>

As this relates to Tamar, she did not scream, or fight, or seek help, she attempted to reason with her brother reminding him as Dinah did to Shechem that "*such a thing should not be done in Israel*". Was this an act of permission because they could not fight? She feared losing her virginity, covered in the shame of uncleanness and depression. There were too many players involved in the plot that stole Tamar's dignity for her to trust anyone to help her. This story is among some of the most shocking in the Bible. It features crimes rape, fratricide, and possibly incest. It has a cast of vivid characters a lust-crazed prince, his insidious sidekick; a princess violated and spurned, *an* avenging brother, and their devastated father. Lucid prose and terse, at times brutal, understatement set 2 Samuel 13 among the pearls of biblical literature.<sup>48</sup>

The tragedy of Tamar's rape is introduced in such a way as to establish links with and draw parallels to the story of David and Bathsheba. Can anyone know the exact time that Tamar knew she was in danger? Was it when she discovered that Amnon wanted to watch her prepare the food, when she could feel his eyes on her, running over her in a way that made her feel embarrassed and uncomfortable? Was it when he refused to eat

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<sup>47</sup> The theme of a king presented with insoluble social-sexual dilemmas is common in the Western literary tradition; cf. Orestes, Oedipus, and King Arthur

<sup>48</sup> William H Propp, 1993. "Kinship in 2 Samuel 13." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, 39-53. *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost (accessed November 20, 2014).

and sent all the servants out, leaving the two of them alone?<sup>49</sup> Sadly women all over the world as in the old and New Testament have and are still being raped, abused and beaten, with nowhere to turn and no one to talk to. This project is meant to bring awareness to the complexity of abuse which has been concealed under the pretext of Christianity. Swept under the rug so to speak, it has been commonly thought that Christians do not engage in this type of behavior. The contemporary literature offers terminology and concepts which allow the biblical account of abuse to be articulated.

### **Old Testament Shadow of the New Testament**

Old Testament scripture explores the suppression of what the New Testament, Ephesians 5:22-33 will expose. According to Hebrews 10:1, the Old Testament was written as a shadow of a new and better way which is the New Testament. For the law has a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect<sup>50</sup>.

The Old Testament was written for our learning. Romans 15:4 Paul wrote “for whatsoever things that were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and the comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”<sup>51</sup> Three primary individuals, Samuel, Israel’s last judge, Saul, her first king and David the founder of a dynasty that would endure over three centuries. It is a book about transition; a transition

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> NRSV.

<sup>51</sup> Old or New Testament, *Which Should We Follow?* by Chuck Northrop © 1993

between Theocracy to Monarchy. Under theocracy God provided the periodic leadership needed by the people. Now the leadership would be institutionalized and hereditary.<sup>52</sup> Like other biblical historians the author of Samuel is unknown, the book of Samuel was originally one book, however probably according to the great length of the material it had to be divided into the Septuagint two parts (1 and two kingdoms) 1 Samuel ends with the death of Saul and 2 Samuel is prominently dedicated to the reign of David. The book is named after the first major character in the narrative.<sup>53</sup> The research process must involve intense study of those that have already researched and studied these scriptures, rather than rely only on experience and concern, which reinforce facts and remove preconception.

The objective is to tell Tamar's story in a modern way through the preaching and teaching of God's word. 2 Samuel 13:1-25 This is a story mixed with sickness, immorality, murder and eventually exile, intertwined in a family that should be saturated in unity, comfort and safety. The tragedy of Tamar's story is introduced in such a way to establish links with and draw parallels to the story of Bathsheba. Like Bathsheba Tamar was beautiful and like Bathsheba Tamar became the object of a man's seeing that aroused unbridled passion and desire to lead to undesired sexual union and subsequent disaster.<sup>54</sup> The plot is executed; all of the players are in place while Tamar's life is on the threshold of being changed forever. Her innocence is in jeopardy of being stolen. In the beginning of Tamar's story several persons appear the abuser, the instigator, as well as the unaware,

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<sup>52</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mt: Zondervan, 2006), 309

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Catherine Clark Kroeger & Mary J. Evans, *The JVP Women's Bible Commentary* (Inter Varsity Press 1989), 177.

and the abused. There is a succession that follows moving progressively to the intermediate and ultimately the end. The connection between other characters offer a consecutive sequence to this devious plot. As the story unfolds diverse situations occur<sup>55</sup>. To facilitate understanding of the biblical text, illumination is sought in Hebrew word searches, biblical articles, and cross references within the Hebrew Bible. There are many interconnections, be it the theme of abuse or those involved in the abuse. Both texts treat rape as a phenomenon of domestic violence.<sup>56</sup>

Unmarried daughters were kept in close seclusion from the company of men neither strangers nor even their relatives of the opposite sex were permitted to see them without the presence of witnesses. Of course Amnon must have seen Tamar, for he had conceived a violent passion for her, although it was forbidden by the law. Tamar was left in the house of a sexual maniac without any witnesses and no one to help her. She entered as a virgin; and exited in shame. Disgrace was synonymous with her name and things would never be the same. David heard these things and was very angry (vs.21) but he did nothing to vex his son Amnon because he was his first born and he loved him. Again the woman is pushed to the side and marginalized. She is abused by her brother, ignored by her father in the interest of his firstborn son. David the last born (1 Samuel 16:11) has forgotten his own beginnings. The king, the diligent taker of women would not take up his daughters cause.

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<sup>55</sup>r Melissa Raphael, Professor "*Cover Not Our Blood with Thy Silence": Sadism, Eschatological Justice and Female Images of the Divine.*" *Feminist Theology* 8 (1995), 85-105.

## Rape is Rape

The brutal proposition jarred her sensibilities, he “forced her”.<sup>57</sup> He snatched her, he took her involuntarily and entered into her violently, and violence was rendered. This word Force impacted the violation of Tamar. In the *Interpreters Bible* several meanings are explained in defining force: “1. aw-saw; a primitive root to do or make; in the broadest sense or application (a.) Clearly defined; having distinct limits; fixed; as, definite dimensions; a definite measure; a definite period or interval, and 2. (a.) Having certain limits in signification; determinate; certain; precise; fixed; exact; clear; as, a definite word, term, or expression. A thing defined or determined<sup>58</sup>. Amnon crossed all boundaries and had no constraints and no limitations. He only had the desire for his own personal gratification matter what the cost. As Amnon was raping Tamar she pleads, “Don’t force me. No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly.”<sup>59</sup>

The words defined above can be used to show the negative behavior that has been inflicted on many women in history as well as present times. In the telling of Tamar’s story, how many other women who have been forced, snatched, stories are being told? There are many women crying for help while eyes are closed and heads are turned to ignore the perpetration of abuse. Many are overwhelmed by shame, exploited by lust, and

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>58</sup> James L. Mays, *Harper Collins Bible Commentary* (The Society of Biblical Literature: Harper San Francisco 1998), 734.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

forced into positions of submission. This issue is long overdue for the attention that it deserves in the church and the changes that need to take place. Where would she go, who would she marry? Maybe we can just cover it up since I am not his full sister the Leviticus law says we can marry. Leviticus 18 had been drawn up to protect someone just like her from illicit sexual advances of members of her family (Leviticus 18:11) *the nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. 12 Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she is thy father's near kinswoman.* Hebrews 9:17 speaks of a testament or covenant in relation to a death<sup>60</sup>. There was no agreement, or contract between these family members. Something was broken, even destroyed in the heart of Tamar.

The deposit of death appears to have settled itself in Tamar after this horrible ordeal. Did Amnon not understand that they would be ridiculed and scorned, she could not be in agreement with his proposal to lie with him? He forced her and lay with her anyway. Forcing the entrance and ravaging the inner sanctum of her identity so that the child in her died<sup>61</sup>. The text says that Amnon “loved” Tamar, but already understanding is challenged. We are first struck by the verb “love” which was together with other effective language, so obviously missing from David’s story. Yet the word is immediately defined in terms of “doing something to her.”(vs.2) In this context love looks more like desire, and will soon most resemble “lust”

Many words speak to Tamar’s plight, lust being one of many. Lust, according to *Vine's Dictionary* (25)<sup>62</sup> the Epithumia, denotes a strong desire of any kind, the various

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<sup>60</sup> W.E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White, Jr. *Vines expository Dictionary* (Thomas Nelson Publishers 1989)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 25.

kinds being frequently specified by some adjective. The word lust is used to describe good desire in Luke 22: 15, Phil.1:23 and 1Thess. 2:17. everywhere else in the Bible it is a negative term. In Romans 6:12, the injunction against letting sin reign in our mortal body to resist the lust of the flesh. “Thereof” in this verse refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity. Folly is defined as a lack of good sense or normal foresight and is also said to be foolish in actions or conduct. Folly is primarily used to describe idolatrous activities, although it does not have sexual connotations in at least two instances as seen in 2 Samuel 13:12, as well as Job 31:1 and Proverbs 6:25.

The context is negative in meaning and is accompanied by a strong warning of God's impending punishment on those with such a strong, all-encompassing desire for inordinate affections. Lust has a deep, strange, and evil quality. It sinks a person into himself, into the darkness. This darkness permits no other subjects, only objects of desire. It objectifies and uses other people to gratify one's fleeting desire, as Amnon forced Tamar to do, then casts people aside like trash. *Vine's* defines lust as a strong craving or desire, often of a sexual nature. Though used relatively infrequently (twenty-nine times) in Scripture, a common theme can be seen running through its occurrences. The word is never used in a positive context; rather, it is always seen in a negative light, relating primarily either to a strong desire for sexual gratification.

The NKJV translates a number of words as lust in the Old Testament. Ezekiel uses lustfulness as part of an extended metaphor for the foreign alliances, immorality or idolatrous worship. In secular literature, the word indicates only a strong desire and can carry either good or bad connotations. The Greek word *epithymia* [eipigumival] and the Hebrew words *awah* [h”w'a] and *hamad* [d: in] can themselves be used in a neutral or good sense (i.e., Matt.13:17).

The New International Version does not translate the word as "lust." Rather, it is translated as "desire," "Longing," "and the like."

The context surrounding the word lends to this translation in such instances. However in Scripture, as translated in the *Interpreters Bible Dictionary*, the word is used for a strong desire that is negative and forbidden. Indeed, the unregenerate are governed and controlled by deceitful lusts or desires (i.e. 2 Samuel: 13).<sup>14</sup> Unlike David with Bathsheba, however Amnon is unable to send for and take Tamar, because as a young marriageable woman she is subjected to strict oversight. So he must use deception to take her. The son's story imitates the fathers and differs from it at the same time. And at the heart of the difference is perhaps the outcome of the women. Bathsheba whose taking is described in such dispassionate terms is finally offered comfort by David. Tamar exclusively "loved" at the beginning (vv.1-4) is at the end excessively hated by her rapist. (vv.22, 14,-17): he seizes, overpowers and rapes her.<sup>63</sup> Dinah pursued by Shechem loved her, wanted to marry her, but raped her. Forced himself on her.

Absalom and Tamar were always of higher rank than Amnon because their mother was a Syrian princess. Amnon's mother had been a woman of the southern wilderness whom David married along with Abigail while he was still fleeing King Saul. This means that David was an outlaw at the time of Amnon's birth. David was fifty three years of age, Amnon was twenty two, Absalom twenty and Tamar fifteen. Amnon being the oldest was considered to be the crown prince<sup>64</sup>. Today the rape of Tamar would be classified as "statutory rape" . . . unconstitutional, illegal.

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<sup>63</sup> James L. Mays, *Harper Collins Bible Commentary* (The Society of Biblical Literature: Harper San Francisco 1998),734.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid .

### Bolt the Door

Anna H.K. Apple of Idle wild Presbyterian Church in Memphis Tennessee shares her views on *The Rape of Tamar* written by Pamela White with a “what if theory” Apple ponders what if Jonadab had been a better relative who encouraged Amnon to consider the cost. What if Amnon had really loved Tamar and not just lusted for her. What if her request had been honored? What if Amnon had not locked the door? But Amnon called the keeper of the house and demanded that he put her out of his presence and lock the door behind her. “Bolt the door after her: These words of Amnon demonstrate one domestic violence perpetrator’s way to silence a victim, lock her out, and maintain power and control. If I don’t see her, if I don’t smell her, if I don’t hear her then I am free from the damage that I have done.<sup>65</sup> “Bolt the door.” Is also what the church does when they have a hard text” Lock out the truth. There is no abuse in our churches that is just a myth. The church has something to say about supporting the widows which guides our responses when we move in with casseroles and condolences but when it comes to domestic violence as a church we should be on the front line and we aren’t. As both a mother and pastor I long for the church to be real and authentic-where we don’t shy away from hard facts of human suffering, especially among women who are victims of

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<sup>65</sup> Anna H.K. Apple of Idle: “*The Rape of Tamar*” wild Presbyterian Church in Memphis Tennessee (Journal for Preachers), 6.

domestic violence.<sup>66</sup> Apple refers to Tamar as silenced and desolate (somema: meaning a land that is laid waste) Apple does not believe that God wants any human being to fell as though they are discarded trash. The common thread that runs through the minds of many victims of abuse is shame which attaches itself to their lives. The shame that Tamar talked about. Most often the questions are what did I do to cause this? It must have been my fault, now guilt has been transferred into the mind of the victim rather than to the perpetrator.

### **The Effects of Shame**

I am bad, I am inferior, and I am worthless. Author of *Psychology of Shame*, Gershwin Kaufman states in his book that "Shame is a loss of face, it feels like a wound made from inside .Shame is dishonor, fallen pride, a broken Spirit. The beaten humiliated individual whether defeated as a child by a brutalizing parent or defeated as an adult by a dead end career or marriage has been defeated by shame, has endured it until it has literally broken self. If it goes unchecked shame can engulf the self, immersing the individual into deep despair. To live with shame is to feel alienated and defeated, never feeling good enough to belong. And secretly the self feels to blame, the deficiency lies within. Shame is without parallel a sickness of the soul."<sup>67</sup>

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* defines shame as "the painful consciousness of guilt, unworthiness, or failure, and the ignominy often connected with it" (306). S.J. De Vries addresses this subject saying, "The experience of shame may be

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid .

<sup>67</sup> Gershwin Kaufman: *Psychology of Shame*

very painful, and among the Hebrews it was manifested in face bearing and dress in Scripture, a common theme can be seen running through its occurrences”<sup>68</sup> (Ibid). The *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary* defines shame as “the guilt a person feels or should feel for having sinned against God (e.g., Jeremiah 2:26), but it can also connote the disgrace one finds in failure, either by actively having done something wrong or by having failed to do something right (1003)<sup>69</sup> Violence, abuse and oppression are about coercion, a person or group use methods of control normally considered unlawful to further their goals. The control can be interpersonal or institutionalized, overt or covert. All forms further the unequal distribution of power. Tamar became well acquainted with these emotions which would eventually cause her to sit in sack cloth and ashes and forget who she was, not saying a word.

Not even revenge would change the damage that been perpetrated upon her. Tamar’s story was told in the Old Testament and today there are many families with at least one member being abused or violated in some way. There are far too many families that have or may presently be experiencing violence in some form. Abuse and violence have no prejudices and biases, and they are not gender specific. Although the majority of offenders are male, this is a universal problem which has transcended time and boundaries. Violation continuously raises its ugly head in families across the nation: my family, your family, and possibly more families than be imagined.

In his article *Breaking the Silence* J. Alfred Smith: states that for every Tamar that has been wounded by patriarchy there is a word from Isaiah 66:12, “for thus says the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> James L. Mays, *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary* (The Society of Biblical Literature: Harper San Francisco 1998), 740.

Lord for a mother who comforts her child, so will I comfort you, In Isaiah 49:15, God reason's with us: can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child in her womb? Even these she may forget but I will not forget you. Perhaps the large number of women graduating from our Association of Seminary Schools in United States and Canada accredited seminaries will be free thinking about God in non-anthropomorphic categories of biblical literalism and will preach texts of feminine images of God. These images unconsciously shape our attitudes and response to those with whom we interact. Embracing these images in worship helps us to engage with God's gracious multifaceted invitation to us.<sup>70</sup>

J. Alfred Smith references Bible scholar Renita Weems in her views on Old Testament sexual issues. "Careful interpretations of scriptural images are imperative for readers who may utilize a deficient ethic in creating a distorted definitions of persons by gender, class and race. For example the use of naked battered women's bodies in the prophecies of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are present for divine punishment and for denouncing public policies and practices of political and religious establishments. Readers may miss this point and end with misogynist behavior. Hebrew bible scholar Renita Weems reminds us of the marriage and sexual customs of Old Testament times.

A woman's sexuality was the exclusive property of her husband or whoever was the head of her household. Fathers were compensated for the daughters, and brothers avenged their sisters' humiliation and male cousins could broker the marriages of their female cousins. Professor Weems says perhaps more than any other material in the Bible, the portraits of women's sexuality drawn by Israel's prophets have contributed to the overall

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<sup>70</sup> Kristina Lacelle Peterson, Recovering Discarded Images "In *Women and the Church, Christian Reflection: A Series in Faith and Ethics*, Robert Kruswictz ed. (Waco Texas, The Center for Christian Ethic, Baylor University 2009,) 11.

impression one gets from the Bible that women's sexuality is deviant, evil and dangerous.

Women, sex and marriage were used by the prophets to make politicized commentaries on Israelite society, the political fortunes of Israel”<sup>71</sup>.

### **Violence, Abuse, Oppression**

Women, especially Christian women can have difficulty identifying what counts as violence abuse and oppression. It may be easier for us to recognize the victimization of others before we can recognize it in our own lives. The difficulty in recognizing abuse comes honestly. The Christian belief system and scripture are often understood to teach unrestrictive self-sacrifice, endless forgiveness, humility as a chief virtue and sin as pride and self-will. While these can represent valid components as a Christian Theology an uncritical appropriation of them often blinds women to the violence in their lives and the ones that's close to them. It can also stop women from following Christ in opposing such injustice.<sup>72</sup>

Traditional Christian writing, preaching and advice historically have come from people who possess some societal power. They are thus more familiar with powers, temptations and benefits. Those with power are often less clear about the effects of violence, abuse and oppression on the unwilling recipients of it. Christian's exhortation is often presented with the sinner, rather than the victim in mind. The voice of the formerly voiceless women have begun to speak. Many of them have heard a clear strong message

<sup>71</sup> J. Alfred Smith Sr. article *Breaking the Silence*: Emeritus: Pastor of Allen Temple Baptist Church Oakland California and professor of preaching and church ministries at American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkley California and is past president of the American Baptist Churches of the West. And progressive National Baptist Conference.

<sup>72</sup> Renita J. Weems, *Battered Sex and Violence, In the Hebrew Prophets, Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis :Fortress Press, 1995)

in scripture against taking advantage of the vulnerable or creating situations of oppression. From their experiences and a renewed reading of the bible many abused persons have been able to identify oppression, share their knowledge and learn what heals and frees. Who will pray with Tamar, who will stand by her side as she pleads for justice? <sup>73</sup>

### **New Testament**

Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands" Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. <sup>30</sup> For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:22- 32

Was the Apostle Paul encouraging men to dominate women in Ephesians 5:22 when he says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto to the Lord for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: his body, and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything",<sup>74</sup>

As we look at 2 Samuel 13: Could Ephesians 5:22 been a mandate for Tamar to concede to Amnon's desires no matter what the request or the consequences?

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> NKJV

No she was not his wife, but he was a man. Are not men superior to women in the Bible?

Or was Paul reminding the men that God had blessed them with a helpmate a jewel?

Genesis 2:18-24 explains the role of the woman as the helpmate: "Then the Lord God said it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him. So God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up the place. And Adam said "this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she has been taken out of Man."<sup>75</sup>

What happened to the harmony in marriage, the appreciation for the woman that was given by God to man? Out of the Wisdom of Solomon in Proverbs 18:3, man was reminded, "He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtains favor of the Lord."

Was Paul encouraging unity in marriage and not superiority that two could walk and live together in harmony? Ephesians instructs husbands to "love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."<sup>75</sup> The parallelism between Christ's love for the church and husbands' love for their wives reveals to us examples of beautiful unions. Somewhere along the way the concept of this scripture was lost.

In the article "What Does Submit in everything really mean," Steven R. Tracy states that very little has been written to address the parameters of marital submission in terms of specific issues that are increasingly confronting Christian women. His question is what are the limits of marital submission? Tracy emphasizes that this reveals an unbiblical capitulation to modernity for traditional gender role theology, which makes an assertion that "modern, secular society asks such questions merely to control "the scope of someone's authority," whereas the biblical writers place virtually no limits on

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<sup>75</sup> Proverbs 18:3

submission and authority." Hence "the whole of the woman's life" (everything she does) has to be subordinate to her husband<sup>76</sup>.

Tracy states that in actuality universal human depravity has created a world in which power and authority are often misused and hence must be qualified. Scripture records hundreds of instances of ungodly authorities whose commands had to be disobeyed. Given the intimate nature of marriage, the abuse of authority and the dilemma of submission are particularly acute since forms of male abuse of power are common. For instance, one fourth to one third of North American women will be assaulted by an intimate partner in their lifetimes. Physical abuse rates in Christian homes are similar to societal rates.<sup>77</sup> Less severe forms of abuse (non-criminal) are considerably more common. Many of the ugly situations that thousands of Christian women continually deal with are completely ignored in the non-equalitarian literature,<sup>78</sup> leaving Christian women to fend for them when seeking to discern what obedience to scripture looks like in their real world.

The stakes are very high when we relate marital submission to ethical issues such as abuse, pornography, and the treatment of children.<sup>79</sup> Just as there are somewhat perfect marriages, imperfect marriages also exist. Everyone is not capable of showing love. The act of love is a gift. For example, wife abusers are master connivers. Men who abuse their

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<sup>76</sup> Steven R. Tracy :Helen M. Eigenerg, *Women Battering in the United States: Till Death Do Us Part* (Prospect Heights Ill: Waveland, 2001) one of the largest and most cited surveys of domestic violence is the Violence Against Women Survey that was Joint effort by the National institute of Justice.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., .2.

<sup>78</sup> W. Annis and Roger R. Rice, *A Survey of Abuse Prevalence in the Christian Reformed Church Journal of Religion and Abuse* 3 (2001):7-40

wives and children are very personable and friendly on the outside. These men appear to be sincere, open, warm, kind, generous, and good-natured. They appear to be people anyone would want to meet. Abusers are sociopaths. They can masterfully hide their true nature. In the church the pastor is the main person the abuser wants to fool, that is unless the pastor is the perpetrator. This is a major problem that has no quick solutions, but the longest mile begins with the first step.

Domestic violence is still extremely common and currently operating in the church. Physical violence is a matter of power and control, not provocation or the inability for anyone to control their anger. Abusers pride themselves in taking authority over the lives of their victims.

More distressing is how in “Christian” families the Bible is misused as a source of justification for such domination and abuse. The will of the woman and the reasonableness of the request are irrelevant to folk who misinterpret the text. Thus, when a wife refuses to “obey” her husband he sees it as his job to make her “get in line.”<sup>80</sup> The misreading does an injustice to the text and to the victims of domestic violence. Ephesians 5:22 is preceded by verse 21 which states, “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”<sup>81</sup> The Apostle Paul was referring to God’s transforming work, people giving of themselves freely and mutually. This fits the opening verses of this chapter (Ephesians 5: 1-2), which tells us to “Be imitators of God” by “living a life of

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<sup>80</sup> Pamela Cooper-White, “*The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church’s Response*” (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) cited in Bruce C. Birth,

<sup>81</sup> Nancy Wilson, *The fruit of Her Hands: Respect and the Christian Woman* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon, 1997) the emphasis on spiritual equality in this hierarchical model leads to some interesting explanations of marriage that strain the definition of equality

love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.”<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Paul goes on to teach husbands to love their wives as they would love their own bodies (Ephesians 5: 28). Surely a husband would not inflict the same kind of wounds on himself that the batterer does on his victim. In fact, Paul insists that a husband’s mutual submission to his spouse compels the husband to love sacrificially even as Christ loved the church and died for it (Ephesians 5:25). How many pastors in recent years have admitted to advising women in abusive marriages that their marriages must be preserved at all cost?

This gives the implication that because Christ suffered that they should endure suffering in order to adhere to the Word of God. There is a highly destructive consequence to this advice which should never be given. This type of advice does not honor God and does not promote healthy family relationships. More often than not, it is given with intentions that seek to honor the Gospel, exalt Christ, and preserve critical relationships. Nevertheless, it is the contention that violence, physical or emotional within the marital relationship, constitutes a breach of fidelity and is therefore grounds for separation or annulment of the covenanted marriage.

The implications of this position are, of course, immense and threatening but only to the abusive husband or wife.<sup>83</sup> Standing within the reformed theological tradition, how can such a perspective be derived from scripture? Part of the difficulty is translating the Bible’s teachings (which were by in large rooted in a patriarchal society) into our own context while maintaining fidelity to a key confession, *Sola Scriptura*.(by scripture alone, the doctrine that the Bible contains all knowledge necessary for salvation and holiness)

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<sup>82</sup> *Harper Collins Bible Commentary*: Mays, James General Editor (November 2000)

<sup>83</sup> *Harper Collins Women’s Bible Commentary*:

The Bible will serve as a theological directive from which we must do constructive theology in order to deal with a tragic pattern of social and personal sin: domestic violence. In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul provides an unqualified injunction for wives to “submit” (5:22) to their husbands. No doubt, in our late modern context (where feminism has rightly pointed out unjust male social power structures) such an injunction is viewed with great suspicion—even to the point of throwing into doubt the credibility of the Bible itself.<sup>84</sup>

There is another side, however, to this injunction, which emphasizes what God has ordained and that is the obligation the husband is expected to acknowledge: to emulate Christ-like behavior in his relationship with his wife. “Husbands,” the Apostle states directly, “love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her” (5:25). To begin constructing a theology that adequately deals with the problem of violence within the marital bond, we must first understand Ephesians 5 within its own context before providing a fresh theological articulation for our central concern: violence within the marital bond. It is no secret that women in the ancient world did not enjoy a high status (though some exceptions did exist). Indeed, Jesus’ teachings about and attitudes toward women are today rightly regarded as having been revolutionary within his context (even if understood as paltry within ours).

Paul, in contrast, is often seen as reinforcing male dominated social structures, though in Ephesians 5 he is clearly attributing unparalleled importance to women.<sup>85</sup> This attribution is remarkable, on account that the Ephesians’ society regarded women as only

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<sup>84</sup>Denise George. “*What I wish Pastors Knew* “Subordination of Women and Domestic Violence”, Rutgers L. Rev. 51 (1998): 1207

<sup>85</sup>James Mays, *Harper Women’s Bible Commentary*

slightly above the status of slaves. At best, women had a functional value and would certainly not have been considered worth dying for—which is precisely the Apostle’s injunction. Paul’s inversion of women’s subjugation, requiring the exaltation of the woman through the character of the husband, is further nuanced by the particular ground on which his admonition rests: the atonement. First, Paul is *not* admonishing all women to be submissive to all men. Rather, he refers specifically to the marital bond and its analogous relationship to the atonement. Thus, Paul is not appealing to social structures but to the particular character of a specific relationship that he—with apostolic authority—understands as critically important regarding the essence of the church as the bride of Christ. His scope is therefore quite narrow, and the analogy to atonement with which he honors the husband-wife relationship is seminally unique.

Despite the elevated status of women in Ephesians, critics of Christianity (especially those within the feminist movement) remain offended by Paul’s command to “submit.” But their concerns are not assuaged by the reciprocal command that husbands submit to self-sacrificial *agape* love as exemplified by Christ. Unfortunately, in the minds of many women this passage serves only as a catalyst of fear and perhaps even justification for their suffering. Consequently, many women believe it requires practical capitulation to domineering abuse of power in the hands of husbands—who are *commanded* to love and cherish their wives as does Christ the church—within the marital bond.<sup>86</sup> This is due to the misappropriation of the term “submit” by many feminists and conservative Christians. Feminists view “submit” as dangerous forfeiture of power leading to the passive acceptance of oppression while conservative Christians

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<sup>86</sup> Merrill F. Unger: *Vines Expository Dictionary* (1996)

interpret "submit" as a universal command. Ironically, those who interpret this exhortation as having an absolute value—submission in all instances despite all behaviors and applicable to all women and men—miss the meaning of the text entirely (Vine W.E n.d).<sup>87</sup> As noted above, this exhortation is applicable *only* to the relationship between husbands and wives within the marital covenant that God has established through Christ in relationship with his church. Second, submission is here conditioned by the character the husband is called to demonstrate. Nevertheless, the wife is to submit. The text requires that we affirm this. This is our point of departure from the feminist critique. While we acknowledge that oppressive power structures and particular acts of violence all too often go unchecked, this text does not warrant affirmation of absolute liberty of the wife from the husband. Yet, if we are to disavow the notion of liberty from the husband without falling prey to absolutizing the wife's submission, we must deal with the problem of the use of power.

Despite our distrust of power, it is incumbent upon us to recognize that the practical character of power is ambivalent. It is an instrument which is put to use in both good and bad ways. Psychologically speaking, this is difficult to accept. The world is dominated by systematized power structures, and depending on one's place in those structures, we are either objects or subjects of power. In this way evil is understood as a form of power. However, according to the Christian tradition evil is not a positive force, and therefore power used in evil ways is no power at all. Rather, power is always and only a positive, creative force and evil is a negating inversion of force which only destroys. On this account, power is never truly ambivalent. Rather, power in its truest sense is a gift from God that is inherently good and therefore can only be expressed

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

through goodness.<sup>88</sup> How do we apply Ephesians five to the truth of God? If men and women were made in the image of God and the woman was created for the man, did that make the man superior to the woman? In *The Excellent Wife*, Martha Peace argues that the wife is to be submissive in all things, including small and seemingly unimportant requests. The wife should consult her husband on matters, bear her husband's sin against her, and only appeal to her husband's decisions one time when she disagrees. Otherwise she is to be submissive unless she is asked to sin against God's word.<sup>89</sup> I am nowhere close to agreement with Peace on this subject. The occurrence of violence within marriage is an unqualified use of power for evil purposes. We speak of it actively but it is, in fact, a direct assault upon the creative act of God in constituting the marriage and thus a negation.

The Christian marriage is equivalent to the relationship between Christ and the church, and thus the result of an active will to create a new basis for the relationship between a husband and a wife. God's work in marriage is the unification and reconstitution of the very beings of the marriage partners in order to create a sacred covenant. Drawing our attention to the analogy between Christ and the church, we understand that the church is in covenant with God and that this covenant is based on God's character and his promises to provide, protect, and love the church. This same charge is given to man concerning his wife. If God were to do harmful violence to the church, such an act would be a violation of God's faithfulness and indeed nullify

<sup>88</sup>Subordination of Women and Domestic Violence." Rutgers L. Rev. 51 (1998): 1207

<sup>89</sup>Molly, Margaret. "Women's rights, human rights and domestic violence " *Human Rights and Gender Politics* (2000):120 Women's Rights George, Denise: *What Women Wish Pastors Knew*

<sup>89</sup>Martha Peace "The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective (Bermidji,MN; Focus, 1999),47-52.

the covenant.<sup>90</sup> The husband enters into marriage in covenant, likewise based on his character along with his wife.<sup>91</sup>

The theological foundation for this project, "Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church," will focus on the discipleship component of the doctrine of the Christian life. What does the Christian really believe and how does what he believes shape his life? According to *Vines Expository Dictionary*, Christian theology is the enterprise which seeks to construct a coherent system of Christian belief and practice, while systematic theology is a discipline of Christian theology that formulates an orderly, rational and coherent account of the Christian faith and beliefs.<sup>92</sup> My question today is why is it that some Christians are so compassionate and concerned about the predicament of our society while many others just go through life as though Sunday morning service and Tuesday night Bible study are the only components of our service to God and community?

If we can explore some foundational resources, we may gain a clearer understanding as to why domestic violence in the church has not become a priority for our clergy. With this question in mind, I began to examine the thoughts and beliefs of others on the subject of domestic violence in the church. As I examine the thoughts of

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Linda L. Gammons, "What's God Got to Do with It-Church and State Collaboration in the subordination of Women and Domestic Violence?" *Rutgers L. Rev.* (1998):51.

<sup>91</sup>Tyrone Inbody. *Faith and The Christian Church*

<sup>92</sup> Merrill F. Unger: *Vines Expository Dictionary* (1996)

Tyrone Inbody in his article “The Faith of the Christian Church,” Inbody reminds us that “the image of God and the fall from God” offer a realistic interpretation of this creature called man who is made a little lower than God and crowned with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5). The human story is a drama consisting of three acts: we are created in the image of God from the dust of the earth; we are alienated from God, nature, each other and ourselves; and we were redeemed by Christ who restores the image of God.<sup>93</sup>

Inbody also states that being made in the image of God does not mean that we stay in the image of God. We become the image of God when we are “in Christ” who is the true image of God (1Cor.4:4). These statements shed light on my question as to why some care and others the true meaning of discipleship in Christ. Every person that sits in the church house is not “in Christ” and Christ is not in everyone. If we have been alienated from Christ, it is not hard to be alienated from each other, ourselves and the oneness that God has called us to.

Dr. Heath Lambert, a professor from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, tells us that the Bible teaches triadic authority. This principle teaches that God mediates his sovereign authority over human beings through three institutions: the family, the church and the state. God imposes a structure of authority in each of these institutions for the purpose of ordering society, restraining sin, and advancing the cause of the gospel in the world. A person operating in any of these spheres tangibly must submit to the authority of God by submitting to the authority of these areas. God implements his authority in each institution by authorizing the use of some kind of force against those who violate the structure of authority in that particular institution.

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<sup>93</sup> Tyrone Inbody: *Introduction to Theology* (W.B. Erdmann, Publishing Company 2005)

The mist begins to lift, however, when the objects of rejoicing in the passage are understood. Christians do not rejoice at suffering. No woman should be happy that she is being abused. Christians look at what God is doing and rejoice in that. Christians do not rejoice at the suffering, but Christians do look at what God is doing and rejoice in purpose. According to the inspired words of James, the goal of all suffering is to make the Christian steadfast, lacking in nothing. This truth means that God is able to accomplish through suffering what he was not able to accomplish without it. According to Dr. Heath Lambert's article titled "A Pastoral Response to Physical Abuse in the Family, "Jesus Christ does not choose to work within our pain to make us more like himself. Embracing this truth requires giving attention to two important matters. One being the biblical teaching is not to convince women to stay in an abusive relationship. The other is to emphasize intimate communion in marriage.

Lambert points out that biblical teaching is not an argument for women to remain in an abusive situation. There are too many passages teaching that abuse is something from which persons should flee for any responsible Bible interpreter to conclude such a thing. 1 Samuel 19:10; Proverbs 22:3; Luke 4:29-30; John 8:59; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. James 1 is not a chain that shackles women to abuse.<sup>94</sup> Instead, it is the key that frees them from believing that the pain they have is purposeless. It gives them hope to believe that even in abuse, as in all the pain we experience in a sinful world, God is able to work to overrule the sinful purposes of wicked people. So that what the wicked intended for evil, God intended for good (Genesis 50:20).

Lambert brings clarity to this statement, helping the reader to understand that the misinterpretation of scripture could do more harm than good to those that are in the midst

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 64.

of suffering in any manner. He states that the teaching of James is also one that requires wisdom (James 1:5-8). Ministers need to arrive here slowly and carefully. Ministers must pray with and for the women to whom this teaching comes that the Lord in heaven will impart it by his grace.

Lambert shares information that is needed to move the victim from anger and resentment towards God to peace and harmony in God. This can only be realized through personal communication with God in the aftermath of abuse. Domestic violence is still extremely common and currently operating in the church. Physical violence is a matter of power and control, not provocation or the inability for anyone to control their anger. Abusers pride themselves in taking authority over the lives of their victims. More ignore distressing is how in "Christian" families the Bible is misused as a source for justification for such domination and abuse.

## **HISTORICAL FOUNDATION**

Violence of every form is evident in our world today. Many acts of violence occur because of personal conflicts, such as religious convictions, culture clashes, social and class divisions, and differing philosophies. The concern of the writer is the influence of violence in the place where peace and love should abide and that is in our homes and in our churches. The historical foundation of this project will engage in the understanding of past practices of this problem. The author will explore the relational history of domestic violence and how the black church has not efficiently addressed this issue.

## Domestic Violence from the Seventeenth Century

During the colonial period, the husband had absolute rights to physically discipline his wife. Since the law held a husband liable for crimes committed by his wife, it was designed to protect him from harm caused by his wife's actions. The colonial views of women as a species apart, without the same feelings and capacity for suffering which men possess, can be traced back to the middle Ages. The views change as we move into the 1900's. Haven House is an emergency shelter founded by Ruth Slaughter for battered wives and children of violent alcoholic men.

While Ruth was at Haven House in Pasadena, Ca, a man is given permission to "castigate his wife and beat her for correction."<sup>95</sup> Ruth Slaughter, realized that there was more to the patterns of repeated violence than she was witnessing in its affiliation to alcoholism. She was approached in 1975 by researchers, community activists, and rape crisis center advocates who wanted to learn how to support women who were speaking out about their wife violence at the hands of husbands and boyfriends. Men could not see their women/wives as human beings and blessings, only objects to beat and control. The colonial church was also influenced by the writings of medieval Christian scholar Friar Cherubino of Siena, who supported the act of wife beating. In a manual titled *The Rules of Marriage*, Cherubino instructed men on how to beat their wives with compassion.<sup>96</sup> Bernard of Siena, an Italian medieval priest preceded Cherubino in

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<sup>95</sup>Ruth Slaughter, Haven House. Pasadena, CA. (1964). Barrie Levy, (2008) Seal Press; A Member of Perseus Books Groups 1700 Fourth Street Berkley, California.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

doctrinal writings on marriage and implored his male parishioners to “exercise a little restraint and treat their wives with as much mercy as they would their hens and pigs.”<sup>97</sup>

Lord Hale, an English jurist, set the tradition of non-recognition of marital rape that was prevalent during colonial times. He stated that when women married they “gave themselves to their husbands” in contract and could not withdraw that consent until they divorced.<sup>98</sup> Lord Hale wrote, “The husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent a contract with his wife hath given herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract.”<sup>99</sup> This is the basis of the “contractual consent” theory. In addition to advocating for wife beating, Lord Hale burned women at the stake as witches and has been characterized as a misogynist.

As we look at domestic abuse in colonial America beginning in the 1700s, we find that women continue to be mistreated as objects of their husbands’ dominant control. If a woman miscarried she was beaten by her husband. No matter the reason, husbands had the right to beat their wives as if they were property rather than human beings. Women were not free to separate no matter how severe the abuse was. However, during the 1700s women gained some minimal rights. Spousal abuse was officially illegal, but the “rule of thumb” came from this era. The “rule of thumb” is considered to be that a husband has a right to hit his spouse with anything smaller than the width of a thumb. Throughout this era, policies slowly came about to protect wives from abuse, such as

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<sup>97</sup> Kate Sproul, *California’s Response to Domestic Violence* California Legislature, CA: Senate Office of Research. (1996).

<sup>98</sup> Sue Heinemann, *Timelines of American Women’s History* (New York: A Roundtable Press Book/Perigee Book, 1996).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

flogging and other forms of mistreatment. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. She advocated for changes in the education of women and kinder treatment by husbands and lovers.

It was not until the 1800s that women could separate from their husbands because of abuse.<sup>100</sup> Although the English law was beginning to recognize spousal abuse in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it did not allow women to get divorced. The Bible was cited in the United States to allow husbands to publically chastise and beat their wives. Husbands were still allowed to abuse their spouses as long as it could not be seen. This meant abuse on the back where clothing would cover wounds caused by beatings. In 1824, a decision by the Mississippi Supreme Court allowed a husband only “moderate beatings in case of emergency”,<sup>101</sup> in *Bradley v. State*. It is not revealed what the emergencies were. It may have been the fact that men were liable for any wrongdoings their wives committed in public, thereby giving the excuse and justification for beating their wives.

In 1874, a North Carolina man is acquitted in appellate court for whipping his wife because the court felt that they should not interfere in trifling cases. The court ruled that “if no permanent injury has been inflicted, nor malice, cruelty nor dangerous violence shown by the husband, it is better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze and leave the parties to forget and forgive.”<sup>102</sup> Laws in England during the mid-1800s gradually began to be implemented to protect women from spousal abuse. In 1857, the Matrimonial Causes Act is passed in the United Kingdom. The Act gave victims of

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<sup>100</sup> Sue Heinemann, *Timelines of American Women's History* (New York: A Roundtable Press Book/Perigee Book 1996).

<sup>101</sup> Sue Martin, *Battered wives*. New York. , (1976).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

violence some legal rights and protection if they were in grave danger, as well as the right to divorce. It also allowed victims of violence to obtain a legal separation from the husband, entitled them custody of the children, and permitted them to retain earnings and property secured during the separation. Such a separation order could only be obtained if the husband had been convicted of aggravated assault. Courts also began to show signs that they might hold husbands responsible and found guilty of marital rape,<sup>103</sup> but there continued to be setbacks.

During the late 1800s, influential male philosophers and female social activists were bringing domestic abuse to the forefront. In 1869, John Stuart Mill wrote *The Subjection of Women* but waited eight years before he even published it because he feared no one was ready to deal with it. Mill pleads for reform for women in divorce laws, especially divorce cases based on violence. In 1878, Francis Power Cobbe published *Wife Torture in England*. She denounced the treatment of wives in Liverpool's "Kicking District." She documented 6,000 of the most brutal assaults on women over a three-year period who had been maimed, blinded, trampled, burned and murdered. Cobbe presented a theory that abuse continued because of the belief that a man's wife is his property.<sup>104</sup> During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, domestic violence continued to receive attention as a critical social issue.

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

## Domestic Violence and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

With the 1900s came more reform for women. In 1901, Maryland becomes the first state to enact a law that makes men accountable for their violence toward their wives, making it a crime. Their punishment could be a lashing and jail time. The ruling did not provide a true understanding of what permanent injury means. Did it mean paralysis, death, or permanent scars? This ruling needed more clarity. This statement was too vast to define when speaking of domestic violence.

In 1911, the first family court is established in New York, and in 1914 an adult psychiatric clinic is set up in Chicago and is the first of its kind. In 1919, American women are given the right to vote as set forth in the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment of the Constitution. In the 50's and 60's, civil rights movements are being established in the United States for many causes, including women's liberation. In 1962, cases of domestic violence were tried in civil family court in New York. In New York domestic violence cases are transferred from criminal court to family court where only civil procedures apply.<sup>105</sup> The husband never faced the harsher penalties he would have suffered if found guilty in criminal court for assaulting a stranger.

Shelters for battered women were opened in the 1960s, and men were actually prosecuted for assaulting women. In 1977, Minnesota drafted the first bill in the United States against domestic violence. This Minnesota bill was a huge step for the rights of women, although men received no penalty under law until 1979. In 1992, the Surgeon

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<sup>105</sup>United States v. Morrison, 529 U.S. 598, 653 (2000)(Souter, J. dissenting) *Crimes of Violence Motivated by Gender, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights of the House Committee on the Judiciary*, 103d Cong., 1st Sess., 34-36 (1993)

General declared abuse the leading cause of injury to women.<sup>106</sup> Spousal abuse is a perpetual issue that remains at the forefront of women's rights today. Today Americans consider spousal abuse, particularly wife beating, to be a third-world issue.<sup>107</sup> This is not the case. Many women are abused by their husbands every day in America. Shelters are busy and support groups are found in almost every major city. Women, even successful women, put up with continued abuse and make excuses for their husbands, as if the women are responsible or the husbands have no self-control. Although spousal abuse has progressively become not as publically acceptable and even illegal throughout time, this does not mean that abuse does not exist. Wife beatings surprisingly occur on a daily basis in the United States and have to be acknowledged and addressed. This is not a cultural issue but one of humanity, civilization, and rights.

As we take a look behind the scenes of our Black churches today, they are still very close to the mindset that was established in colonial America. Looking at the different dispensations of time, there were only minor shifts in the thinking and behavior of the black church concerning women and wives. The history of the battered women's movement reveals that domestic violence dates back before slavery. Many of the womanist theologians such as Delores Williams, Elaine Brown Crawford, and Karen Baker-Fletcher reflect on their historical research that speaks to women that have been twice enslaved, enslaved through the bondage of being African American while also being enslaved as women.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Nancy Lemon *Domestic violence law: A comprehensive overview of cases and sources*. San Francisco, CA: Austin and Winfield. (1996).

<sup>107</sup> Dobash and Dobash, *Women, Violence and Social Change*. (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>108</sup> Delores S Williams, , *Sisters In The Wilderness: the Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll N.Y: 1993)

Although men may be the minority in the black church, they dominate the ministerial staff as they sit in high-backed chairs in the pulpit in long robes with Bibles in their laps; or they are deacons or members of the board of trustees and sit in the congregation in rows reserved for male dominate groups. Predominately in the black Baptist churches, women augmented the music with tambourines; in the churches where the Holy Spirit was welcomed, it was the women who shouted and did the holy dance, while a deacon or two might urge the preacher of the hour to "make it plain." Marie Fortune reflects: "In the church of her youth, men were called to the ministry but women were not. Women tithed as did men; they launched bake sales and served on the pastor's aid society to support the church financially. Women were the pillars of the black church, but their interests were rarely served because they were always subordinated to those of men or children. As a youth she participant and found the Black church nurturing, but as an anthropologist she was concerned about women's issues, Fortune found the Black church in its patriarchy to be a structure of dominance and oppression in need of fundamental change.<sup>109</sup>

### Black Theologians

Howard Thurman in 1949 and Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1963 approached the significance of the black experience in moral and religious terms. They spoke with eloquence about transcendence through spirituality and love, about goodness driving out evil, and love conquering hate. Thurman's classic work, *Jesus and the Disinherited*,

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<sup>109</sup>Marie, M. Fortune, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox ,1997)

posit that Jesus is at one with "those who stand at a moment in history with their backs against the wall."<sup>110</sup> For Thurman, the challenge is for the marginalized to confront and transcend fear, deception, and hate by embracing love through the agency of the Holy Spirit. For King, it is to have the strength to love one's enemies.<sup>111</sup>

Both challenge the Christian church to do more for those who are oppressed. Neither speaks specifically of the black church or of black women, men, or children; rather, their God talk is at the level of the Christian church in relation to black congregants and their situation in America. James Cone's writings have addressed the question of a black theology of liberation, and he has called for support of black feminist theology, arguing that neither white feminists nor black male theologians have addressed the issues of concern to black women theologians (nor can they).<sup>112</sup> Womanist theologians are African American female theologians who address the issue of patriarchy in the black church. They have mostly agreed to call themselves womanists rather than feminists (womanist denotes a black feminist). According to its proponents, womanist theology is an emergent theology in its own right, but it is inclusive and open to other traditions. Its aim is to listen to the voices of the women who preceded us and then to be inspired by their example. For example, in 1836 Jarena Lee asked to be ordained by Richard Allen, the founding bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but was refused; and one Elizabeth, who was without a surname, reported in 1863 of being prohibited by black men from preaching. Yet both Jarena Lee and Elizabeth defied the strictures of their times and went on to preach the gospel, acknowledging the call to the ministry by God. In

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<sup>110</sup> Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Beacon Press 1949)

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

addressing patriarchy in the black church, womanist theologians are prepared “to challenge the values of domination and structures of oppression in the church and society where they seek to do the work of God’s Reign.”<sup>113</sup>

### **Domestic Violence during the Civil Rights Era**

References to male violence in the family are made in several women’s liberation anthologies, such as *Sisterhood is Powerful* and *Voices from Women’s Liberation*. Neither of these two anthologies contains articles on rape. The anti-rape movement emerges a couple of years later. In 1972, the Supreme Court of North Carolina declares and rules that in the case of wife beating if no permanent injuries are inflicted, nor cruelty or malice involved, then it is better to leave what happens behind closed doors to stay behind closed doors.<sup>114</sup> This is another example of sweeping things under the rug, not wanting anyone to know that women are being abused in their so-called homes this brings forth another mis-conception in what we determine or call home. Therefore the abuse continues and a man still believes a wife is his property.<sup>115</sup> A man could kill a stranger and be tried in criminal court, receive a harsh sentence, and go to jail for years. On the other hand, he could kill his wife and get a slap on the wrist. It appears that the sentiment was “it was only his wife.”

In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan captured the discontent of a whole generation of middle class women who were struggling between aspirations for

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Susan Schechter, *Women and male violence*. (Boston, MA: South End Press 1982).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

fulfillment and an ideology that assigned them to the home.<sup>116</sup> *The Wife Beater's Wife* was written by John Snell, MD, Richard Rosenwald, MD, and Ames Robey, MD, which suggests that battered wives are like the wives of alcoholics and that these wives have a masochistic need that their husbands' aggression fulfills.<sup>117</sup> Is this statement saying women are really psychos? This may be true in some very rare cases but not as a norm. Who gets gratification from someone's aggression?

During the 1970's, Congress passed laws that prohibited discrimination against women in employment and required equal pay for equal work. The traditional marriage contract, however, remained legally intact in America. Beating as cruel and inhumane treatment becomes grounds for divorce in New York, but the plaintiff must establish that a "sufficient" number of beatings have taken place.<sup>118</sup> The defining word is "sufficient." Who determines the number of beatings that are sufficient before charges are filed or action is taken? A study in Chicago revealed that from September 1965 to March 1966, 46.1% of the major crimes perpetrated against women took place in the home.

It also found that police response to domestic disturbance calls exceeded total response for murder, rape, aggravated assault, and other service crimes.<sup>119</sup> This is too much and it has gone too far before any type of action has taken place. If the courts were proactive rather than reactive many lives could have been saved. Between the late 1960's to the early 1970's feminism develops into two major branches, a women's rights

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<sup>116</sup>Betty Friedman, *The Feminine Mystique*

<sup>117</sup>L. Jacobson, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137 (1980), p. 1336. ... Jacobson, 1985; Psychiatric morbidity and psychosocial background in an outpatient population of a general hospital in western Ethiopia.

<sup>118</sup>Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 21.

feminism such as NOW (National Organization of Women) and a women's liberation movement exemplified by socialist feminist and radical feminist groups.

The women's liberation movement, by claiming that what goes on in the privacy of people's homes is deeply political, sets the stage for the battered women's movement. The emerging movement details the conditions of daily life that allow women to call themselves battered. Women's hotlines and crisis centers provide a context for battered women to speak out and seek help. The feminist movement emphasizes egalitarianism and participatory organizational models. In feminist shelters, women create a new morality that is in direct contrast to the competitive, male-dominated organizations and bureaucracies surrounding them. Women are inspired and sustained by their relationships with others, by knowing that their work is crucial and by the feminist process within the shelters. As shelters increase, structural questions arise. Some choose to work collectively and others organize around a hierarchical structure, while still others adopt modified collectives or hierarchies. As more and more shelters and programs receive welfare or Title XX monies, staff workers slowly start to call battered women "clients." Greater attention is given to individual counseling for women and less on group sharing, peer support and teaching battered women to advocate for one another.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>Office on Violence Against Women Grant Act

## Public Exploitation of Women

In the United States, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 14 to 44.<sup>121</sup> Women have suffered oppressive behavior at the hands of men for decades for a simple act of a meal gone badly or the refusal of intimacy. Today women have more of a voice, but yet not enough voice, although women have the right to divorce or separation without repercussion. The sad part about this is that some women never got this far.<sup>122</sup> They were shot, stabbed or maimed before they could file for divorce. The church sanctions the subjection of women, and pastors have advised abused wives to win their husbands' good will through increased devotion and obedience.<sup>123</sup> Abuse would appear to drive the abused away, not draw them closer.

It has already been defined that domestic abuse is used as a method of control and manipulation. It was no different in history as the Christian church vacillated between support of wife beating and encouraging husbands to be more compassionate and to use moderation in their punishments of their wives. The church decided that it was admissible for men to beat their wives. Today greater attention is given to individual counseling for women and less on group sharing, peer support and instruction for battered women to advocate for one another. Social change is discouraged and Title XX funding can be used only for services, but not community education. Clashes between the

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<sup>121</sup>Molly, Margaret. "Women's rights, human rights and domestic violence" *Human Rights and Gender Politics* (2000):120

<sup>122</sup>DeL Martin, (1976). *Battered wives*. New York: Pocket Books.

<sup>123</sup> California Criminal Justice Statistics Center (CJSC), *Review of Domestic Violence Statistics*(recording 187 domestic violence homicides in California in 2003); Chicago Police 27 27 Department, *Quarterly Domestic Violence Statistical Summary, Year-to-Date (June 2005)* (reporting 17 domestic violence homicides in the first six months of 2005 for the city of Chicago

movement and funding agencies that want programs to respond like other service organizations have sapped much energy for several years.<sup>124</sup>

The domestic violence movement has come a long way since the colonial times, but we are still very far removed from the reality of this problem in our very close surroundings of church and home. There are more victims who declare with very strong voices that the embarrassment is not as great as in the past, but the reality is still stagnating and challenging. There is nothing more intimidating than the threat of abuse, which comes in many forms. The demand for domestic violence services today far exceeds the supply. For example, the police process 115,000 calls each year. The work that domestic advocates fulfill provides critical outlets so that no woman or child has to suffer in silence.<sup>125</sup> With these facts in mind, supportive services are crucial to untangling the difficulties that make freedom from domestic violence seem impossible.

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<sup>124</sup> Nancy Lemon (1996). *Domestic violence law: A comprehensive overview of cases and sources*. (San Francisco, CA: Austin and Winfield,1996)

<sup>125</sup> Battered Women's Movement...

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Hypothesis**

Increasing awareness of domestic violence in the church setting will cause people to come face-to-face with this sinful blight in the lives primarily of women and children. The project “Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church” shed the light of scripture on this subject, using workshops and seminars to address this issue and having support groups to comfort and encourage the victims. This ministry unfolded in the city of Columbus, OH at the Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church and other sites as needed. The hypothesis was that domestic violence in the church lacks the awareness that is needed to expose and eradicate this subtle problem. Christians, through prayer and proper translation of the scripture, should be the greatest comforters and give ultimate affirmation of hope and healing for such distresses. The interest was great and according to responses much needed. Upon implementation, the numbers in attendance did not reflect the initial response. Lack of response from the Oakley Full Gospel community called for a different strategy. This strategy was to reach out to women from various churches in the Ohio area. Women came from other churches with strong desires to educate their congregations about the issues concerning domestic violence within their church communities. The process of increasing awareness of domestic violence in the

church shines a light on the fact that there is much disorder surrounding this issue.

Although the gospel is preached and the word is studied, there is still a lack of knowledge on abuse within the Christian community.

Catherine Clark-Kroeger's book *No Place for Abuse* discusses the "silent hush"<sup>1</sup> that is going on in the church. The ministry that I endeavor to carry out will concentrate on turning the silent hush into a loud alert. The projected outcome of my study was that the church will become more receptive to the fact that domestic violence does exist within its doors. The church will also be receptive to training and seeking knowledge that will change the concept of how abuse is perceived. This project culminated with a multi-church domestic violence alert.

### **Intervention**

This alert began with a four-part sermon series to the church (See Appendix F). The series exposed the ugly reality that violence does exist in the church and is actually enhanced through the misinterpretation of the scripture. The educational component, combined with advocacy resources, was the first step to wholeness. Crisis intervention and advanced training workshops and retreats were also utilized. The ministry also explored the laws that focus on this issue and provided referrals to halfway houses and counseling centers. The pre-test and post-test surveys produced evidence on the responsiveness and reaction to how domestic violence has

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Clark-Kroeger and Nancy Nason- Clark, *No Place for Abuse: Silent Killer* (InterVarsity Press, 1956), 8.

been handled by the church and outside agencies. Three different tools were used to obtain data: pre-test and post-test surveys, interviews, and open-ended questions (See Appendix G).

Founded on the data analysis for the qualitative technique of assessing information, this project began with the concepts of the instruments of collected data. Creswell explains this in his book *Research Qualitative Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches*.<sup>2</sup> The main idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem from the participants in order to evaluate the best methods to address it.

Approaching this subject in its relationship to the church resulted in mixed responses to the project model. It appeared that the women who had past involvement in domestic violence were more open to discuss this issue. In contrast, the women who were presently involved in domestic violence expressed levels of denial concerning the matter. With the resources that were chosen, a quantitative tool in the form of a one-question introduction and a questionnaire was the best tool for this research process. The survey was combined with in-depth interviews, which determined additional needs to educate, motivate and inspire each woman to victory instead of victimization. Prior to participant involvement, each party signed and received a letter of confidentiality to reassure each woman of her privacy (See Appendix B).

The interview process went beyond statistics, numbers and other surveys. The interviews gave the person an opportunity to release long time burdens and exhale in the presence of confidants who were truly concerned and able to offer resources for the

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<sup>2</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Inc, 2009), 176.

journey to healing and recovery (See Appendix D). Another element that I implemented was a workshop I developed that focused on “Inner Healing” (See Appendix D).

This workshop engaged the participants in the reality concerning the depth of unforgiveness and the damage that it does. This workshop showed the physical methods of bondage and the process of release. A major breakthrough is realized as the weight of un-forgiveness and deceptive accusation is released from the hearts and minds of those who have been abused.<sup>3</sup>

The project “Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church” used qualitative procedures. This method allows for data collection to develop in a natural setting as described by Creswell.<sup>4</sup> In researching the different methods of data, I found that several instruments worked well with the goal of this project. Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data such as interviews, observations and documents, rather than rely on one single source of data. I could review all the data, make sense of it, and organize it into categories or themes. With this method I believe the outcome was clearly defined so that we did not waste time.

### **Data Analysis**

The project began with a practical one-question survey that would gauge the outcome of the study. Considering the goals and objectives of this project, I chose different methods of data collection. The methods were pre- and post-test questionnaires, interviews, and support groups.

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<sup>3</sup> John Creswell, *Research Design: Mixed Methods Research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 5.

<sup>4</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design, Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Inc., 2009), 175.

All tools were designed to influence the thinking of the participants and to closely examine the problem. The pre-test questionnaire was given at the first meeting of inquiry. These tools are found in the Appendix E.

The educational component, coupled with advocacy resources, was the first step to wholeness. These are the objectives that were targeted:

- Individual personal interviews
- Examination of the statistics
- Gathering open-ended data based on asking general questions and developing analysis from the facts produced by the participants<sup>5</sup>

With this information, I was able to utilize three methods to sort and interpret collected data. This was done by reading through collected data, evaluating interviews, and processing surveys. The next step was to determine how the descriptions and categories would be presented in the qualitative description by combining all of the findings from the interviews, groups and open-ended questions into a narrative. The consolidation and interpretation of data followed. Incorporating all the findings in a narrative provided insight into this project.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.,184.

## Measurement

The World Health Organization (WHO) developed the first modified conflict focus scale (CTS) to measure spousal violence. The Physical Abuse Scale measured the extent to which partners in a dating, cohabiting, or marital relationship engaged in physical attacks on each other.

This Wave two study replaced the Wave one partner-spouse version of the Conflict Tactics Scale. The measurement of this model used a single question to determine whether violence is being experienced. There is a relationship between victimization as a minor and subsequent victimization. Women who reported they were raped before age eighteen were twice as likely to report being raped as an adult. Women who reported they were physically assaulted as a child by an adult caretaker were twice as likely to report being physically assaulted as an adult. Women who reported they were stalked before age eighteen were seven times more likely to report being stalked as an adult.<sup>6</sup>

Research done by Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, shows that women experience more intimate partner violence than men. A little over 21 % of surveyed women compared with 7.4 % of surveyed men reported they were physically assaulted by a current or former spouse, cohabiting partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, or date in their lifetime. Violence against women is primarily intimate partner violence. Sixty-four percent of the women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since age eighteen were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner,

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<sup>6</sup> For further information please visit websites of the following WHO departments: gender, women and health ([who.int/gender/](http://who.int/gender/), [Injuries and violence prevention](http://who.int/injuries/)).

boyfriend, or date. In comparison, only 16.2 % of the men who reported being raped and/or physically assaulted since age eighteen were victimized by such a perpetrator. Women are significantly more likely than men to be injured during an assault.<sup>7</sup> This information was of vital importance as we measured the outcome of the participants' responses to the survey.

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes, "Prevalence and Incidence of Violence against Women: Findings from the National violence Against Women Survey," *The Criminologist*, Vol. 24, No. 3, (May/June 1999): 1, 4, 13-14. Patricia Tjaden and Nancy Thoennes.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

The following is a summary of my project “Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church,” which was launched at Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church. As this project began I was a new resident of Columbus, OH, and my family was my only circle of friends. Personal and professional relationships had not been developed. As a recent graduate of the master’s program at United Theological Seminary and a work study student, much of my time was spent in Dayton, Ohio. Relational connections were stronger in Dayton. It would take many strained conversations introducing myself and explaining my need for assistance to people that I did not know. Reaching back into the corridors of my mind through prayer, I remembered encounters within the domestic violence Women of Color Coalition (WOCC) meetings, as well as conversations with ministry leaders and prison chaplains.

#### **Contextual Associates**

I began to reach out to the warm hearts and friendly smiles of the people who had exchanged business cards with me. With intense inquiries and recommendations along with abundant prayer, God graciously assembled this impeccable team that would become the associates for this project. Becoming a part of the WOCC was one of the best things that I could have done when I moved to Columbus. I did not know that being a member of this organization would be such an asset for this season in my life. I was so

ready to finish the master's program and no one could have ever told me a semester later I would enter the D. Min. program and need professional and contextual associates.

Tonia Moultry became one of my greatest assets in the process of acquiring contextual and professional associates. Tonia would introduce me to Jenita Johnson, a very active member of New Birth Baptist Church. Jenita initiated an interest in the need for domestic violence programs in her church several years ago. She has traveled a bumpy road in her efforts as small strides have been made in this area. Her interest in domestic violence and this project united smoothly. Trenee Pruitt is a long term elder at Oakley Full Gospel and leads the outreach ministry there. Elder Pruitt introduced me to Karen Ferguson, who also knew Jenita. Karen got on board right away and has been very supportive and cooperative in many ways. Elder Pruitt and Karen were instrumental in developing questionnaires and writing up the statement of confidentiality for this project. They were also influential in recruiting organizations to participate and developing public relations for the domestic violence alert.

The last of the contextual associates was my daughter, Tawanna L. Goodall, one of my greatest supporters on this journey who came to me with her story of abuse. Tawanna is a very private individual who will never tell a secret. I never imagined that my daughter had experienced the level of abuse that she shared with others in a support group. She informed me that the work that has been done and the force behind this project triggered her desire to share the deep secrets that she has concealed for years. If for no other reason than shackles being broken, I am glad that God allowed me to be used for such as time as this to do this project in this area of the nation.

Kim Roddy did the majority of the recruiting of the support groups and worked closely with others to organize and develop the total concept of the project. Although she was not familiar with any of the aspects of abuse, Kim had an excellent start with the program. She maintained a steady flow for quite a while and then she was no longer with us. Initially there were six contextual associates. At the end there were four. God supplied every resource I needed in these women. Working in the field of domestic violence, I have found that it is beneficial to have participants who have a passion for this type of ministry. If the calling is not there, the commitment will be temporary and the interest will cease. This type of ministry requires a strong level of compassion and the ability to empathize with women in crisis. The contextual associates have their own stories and share the pain and victory with close family and friends.

#### **Professional Associates**

The search for professional associates would be an even greater challenge. My first recourse was to reach back to my hometown of Indianapolis for resources. After several attempts to connect with familiar acquaintances, I found that some were not really doctors and others made idle promises. For others, there was some willingness to work but a lack of connection. Bringing the focus back to Columbus did not hold a lot of hope. I had to try, and I had to trust God. My contextual associates put forth attempts to help me. After what seemed to be long, uncertain periods of inquisition, some said they would think about it, and others gave me an emphatic "no." They did not believe that they could help.

Again Tonia Moultry, director of Women of Color, introduced me to my first professional associate, Dr. Tyffani Monford Dent. Dr. Dent is a psychologist and motivational speaker who is one of the most talented and well-respected psychologists in the Ohio child welfare and court system. She is a consultant who owns her consulting and psychologist firm. Dr. Dent has developed workshops, and she consults with churches and other organizations in addition to domestic violence organizations. She is the author of two books: *Girls Got Issues: A Woman's Guide to Self-discovery & Healing* and *You Got This! A Girl's Guide to Growing Up*. Dr. Dent is the director of Monford-Dent Consulting, a member of the NAMI-Greater Cleveland Board of Directors, and a board member for the Ohio chapter of The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers.

I became acquainted with Dr. Wanza Jackson in an attempt to establish a prison ministry outreach program. Dr. Jackson began her career with The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction in 1989. She has been in the following positions: personnel director, deputy warden, religious service administrator, and warden of Warren Correctional Institution. She is currently the warden of Dayton Correctional Institution. Dr. Jackson has a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Cincinnati; a master's degree in criminal justice from Xavier University (Cincinnati); and a doctorate of ministry in theology from Life Christian University. She also obtained national certification as an Ohio Certified Public Manager. Dr. Jackson received the prestigious "Medgar Evers" Award" for her leadership in corrections at the national conference in Orlando for The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice. She also received a Proclamation from Warren County Commissioners naming July 30, 2010

as "Dr. Wanza L. Jackson Day" in Warren County for her leadership as warden of Warren Correctional Institution. Dr. Jackson shared her views on the many women who are in prison because of domestic violence, although this was not the focus of the project. Dr. Jackson was always willing to talk and share wisdom.

Unexpectedly Dr. Debra Dennis, an associate of my spiritual daughter, called me. She introduced herself to me, letting me know that during a women's fellowship Kim Harris had talked to her concerning my need for a professional associate. Only known as Kim's spiritual mother, Dr. Dennis told me that day she was committed. God was putting every piece of this project together for his glory and my benefit. Dr. Dennis is a graduate of Ashland Theological Seminary in Ashland, Ohio. She works very closely with her pastor, Dr. Charles Booth, as an associate pastor at Mount Olivet Baptist Church in Columbus. Dr. Dennis is also the division leader and minister of education. She assists the pastor in his dedicated efforts to make Christ centered disciples out of every member who joins the church. She is also active in the music ministry.

Dr. Dennis believes that there is greatness in everyone and as an educator she is continuously attempting to draw that greatness out of every person she encounters. Dr. Dennis is a God send. With her educational background, she has been very effective in her guidance and assistance throughout this process. She also recruited the editor for this project, Dr. Jessica A. Johnson. Dr. Johnson is a correspondent for *The Columbus (Oh.) Dispatch* and an opinion columnist for *The Athens (Ga.) Banner-Herald*.

The blessings of God are immeasurable, as no one else could have strategically orchestrated the blending of the professional and contextual associates in such a harmonious manner. The professional associates enthusiastically stepped up to the plate,

although some were more involved than others. Never did they cease in their prayers and consistent encouragement as I fought to stay focused through total hip replacement surgery and an impromptu move. Each associate continued to brainstorm as we would talk on the phone and on occasion we would meet in my home. Every associate has truly made a sacrificial and collaborative endeavor to bring this project to fruition.

With the strong integrity and experience each associate brought to the table there was never a doubt that confidentiality would be a priority. Flexibility in my schedule allowed me to meet with the team at their convenience, which was not always at the same time. There was a lot of accommodating being done from early, early morning to sometimes late, late at night. When you are inviting others into your life to help you achieve your accomplishments you make sacrifices for those who sacrifice for you.

### **Alliance**

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Luke 10:2) I was blessed to be a part of a congregation with a pastor whose spirit and heart was open to the disregarded. Approaching the pastor was an easy task. The door for “Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church” was more than welcomed, as it fit in perfectly with the social justice component that had recently been implemented. Being in the doctoral program himself, the pastor understood the urgency to develop this program. The pastor immediately extended an open door for this project to be done in this Christian community setting. The pastor stated that this was one of many projects that he was desirous of bringing into the church. As a full time pastor and student himself, he could

only encourage and pray for my success in this stage of my journey. With his sincere heart and many responsibilities within the church and obligations to his family, that was more than enough.

### **Collection of Data**

This project began with a mixed methodology, one-question survey<sup>1</sup> that was circulated through the church for three weeks. Although the ball was dropped by one of the initial associates, enough data was collected to reflect a general determination concerning the future of the project. During our first Thursday night session it was believed if those in the room could define the word abuse or the words domestic violence fluently we were in the midst of a fruitful project. Our first meeting was held at Oakley Full Gospel with ten women in attendance. The results from the survey provide mixed methodology, which involves both numerical (quantitative) as well as proven (qualitative) results that give credibility to this project model. This ministry project was undertaken during a seven-week period from August 2014 to October of 2014 as documented in the timeline.

The one question survey: What is the definition of domestic violence? With intense interest and eagerness, the attendees at the meeting wanted to immediately establish objectives and timelines. We decided to have a special meeting the following Saturday in order to establish necessary guidelines for the duration of the project. Elder Pruitt had drawn up a confidentiality agreement that everyone had to sign as part of the commitment to this process (See Appendix B). The pre-test was also handed out at this

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<sup>1</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 138.

time (See Appendix C). The setting for some of this project was at Oakley and other sites. To accommodate the majority of the group we had to find another venue for our evening meetings as Thursdays were a busy night at Oakley. So we sought other options for our support groups and workshops. After our initial meetings, the Thursday night support groups were held at New Birth Baptist Church.

As the project was being developed, there were continuous glitches that we would encounter. The attendance numbers would vacillate or the associates had situations that would interrupt their participation. There were uncontrollable ups and downs. The commitment level was high, but life doesn't always cooperate with commitment. There was a consistency of two associates at every meeting. The desire for domestic violence awareness was talked about throughout the church community; on the other hand, apprehension was strong. Associates never stopped recruiting participants to become a part of this project. The pastor would give an occasional invitation blurb on Sunday mornings. On occasion we would have two or three visitors drop by to see what we were doing.

### **Intervention**

To strengthen our groups we continually reiterated the need for commitment and confidentiality. The ministry to the abused can be taxing and sometimes overwhelming, so as facilitators and advocates, self-care must be a part of the overall process. A portion of the safe- care was to rotate the role of facilitator, to distribute assignments, and to intercede for each other daily. Every session began and ended with prayer and was held in a safe, secure setting. There was always a deacon in the locked building who was ready

to put us out when our sessions ran over. I believe that there is healing in the songs of Zion, so songs were part of our group worship. Each session was designated for a specific focus. The focus could change from week to week, but the reinforcements of the sessions were that the groups were there to support, acknowledge and move in the direction of healing, affirming that every victim deserved an opportunity to tell her story without judgment. The qualities of a facilitator are the first and foremost commitment to the process for the time designated. Other attributes:

- Have mutual respect within the Christian community
- Have the confidence and support of the church leadership
- Possess a working understanding of abuse
- Always make the participants feel welcome even when they have missed a session or two.

The support group sessions began the first Thursday in September 2014 in order to complete the seven-week timeline. The pre-test was intentionally designed to focus on the role of the faith community (See Appendix E). During the first session, the domestic violence alert in Columbus was discussed. Each member challenged the women in the room to develop their own personal alert for many other women who could no longer cry out for themselves or because some women were no longer with us.

As this subject was approached in its relationship to the church, there were mixed responses to this project model. It appears that the women who have past involvement in domestic violence are more open to discuss this issue. In contrast, the women who are presently involved in domestic violence situations express levels of denial concerning the matter. Some express with reservation that something is going on, but they believe their

mates are not really abusive. With the resources that have been chosen, a quantitative tool in the form of a one-question introduction combined with a questionnaire appears to be the best tool for this research process. The survey will be combined with in-depth interviews, which will determine additional needs to educate, motivate and inspire each woman to victory instead of victimization. Because of the sensitivity and time constraint of this research, the intent of this survey will cover the needed information of post and pre-test (See Appendix E). As part of participant involvement, each party will sign and receive a letter of confidentiality to reassure each woman's "privacy will be enforced" (See Appendix B).

The interview process that was chosen goes beyond statistics, numbers and other surveys. Interviews give the person an opportunity to release long time burdens and exhale in the presence of confidants. The involvement of associates and facilitators showed the true concern and the ability to offer resources for the journey to healing and recovery. Another component in this process is a workshop I developed that focuses on "Inner Healing" (See Appendix F). This workshop engages the participants in the reality concerning the depth of un-forgiveness and the damage that it does. The mental weight of un-forgiveness holds victims in the past and keeps them in bondage. They carry weight from past lies, relationships and self-loathing. A major breakthrough is realized when the weight of un-forgiveness is expelled from the hearts and heads of those who have been abused.<sup>2</sup> At the end of the support groups and workshops the groups were surveyed for effectiveness.

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<sup>2</sup> John Creswell, *Research Design: Mixed Methods Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 5.

## Initiation of the Project

This project was comprised of a four-part sermon series beginning on August 6, 2014. The first sermon that propelled this project began with a short but powerful word: Love. 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13 says that love is a gift. It is the greatest gift and we should desire it above every gift. It is important for women to understand what love looks like through the eyes of God.

### Preaching Series One: What's Love Got to Do with It? Everything.

#### 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 says, "Though I speak with tongues of men and angels and have not love it profits me nothing." Love is a powerful word that is thrown around so frivolously. This word can mean different things to different people. According to the Greek interpretation there are at least four classifications for the word love. Agape speaks of the love of God. Paul, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, wanted to bring understanding that love to someone was more important than love from someone. Paul describes a love that makes a deliberate choice to esteem another higher than one's self.

The following are the other three classifications of love:

- Eros: erotic love is a love of passion. It is called intimate love. This love can apply to marriage and dating.
- Phileo: a love between equals, family and friends expressed with a sense of loyalty.
- Storge: storge is the affection between children and parents. 1 Corinthians 13 brings biblical clarity to the word love.

1 Corinthians 13 is the established plumb line concerning real love. God's definition of love is in this chapter.

1. Love is patient and kind (covers a multitude of sins)
2. Love is not boastful or proud
3. Love is compassionate and forgiving (Christ forgives us)
4. Love suffers long (not easily angered or sensitive)
5. Love rejoices in truth (does not rejoice in iniquity)
6. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things
7. Love never fails
8. Love promotes the fruit of the Spirit (Fruit-singular not fruits plural): love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness (Galatians 5:22)

The first act of love was the word becoming flesh so that the word could take on the sins of the world, being the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus gave his life that we might live. This is the greatest love of all. I love the song "That's Love," which shows the epitome of God's love: "*Jesus went to Calvary to save a wretch, like you and me; that's love ... Jesus hung his head and died, for you and me he bled and died that's love, but that's not how the story ends, three days later he rose again that's love.*" Who-what can compare to this kind of love? If love doesn't look or act like this, it is nothing but a deception. The Bible tells us that in the last days the love of many will wax cold (Matthew 24:12). Also, in a cross reference we find that men will be lovers of themselves more than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:2). If men don't love God how do women expect men to love them?

What's love got to do with being abused or not being abused? Everything! Abusers will wine you and dine you. They will tell you that they "love you." They will

deceive you and abuse you all in the name of love. The cycle will repeat and abuse will continue until the victim gets tired of the merry-go-round and finally gets off. Only you will know when you have had enough. Understanding God's description of love will help you to make knowledgeable assessments of questionable relationships. No one should accept less than God's best for their lives. If God himself desires to give us the very best why should we settle for less? God is not a God of condemnation but a God of mercy and grace seeking to heal and restore. If you are being abused by anyone for any reason allow us to pray for you and direct you to the love of your life: the God of your salvation. God wants you to take his hand and walk eternally with him in love and peace. May the God of grace and mercy cover you with his love!

### **Preaching Series: 2, John 4:1-25**

#### **Worship: The Sacrifice of Praise**

- What is worship?
- What does worship have to do with abuse?
- The woman at the well, abuse and worship

Worship is defined as a condition of being worthy, having honor or giving honor.

It is derived from the Greek word aksios, "worthy is a sense of reverence paid to a supernatural or a divine being. John 4:24 reminds us that God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. What is meant by Spirit? When said of the Lord, the Divine truth proceeds from his Divine good. When this Divine truth flows into man and is received by him, it is the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit, for it flows in immediately from God. This is the reason why Jesus told the

woman that if she drank from his well that she would never thirst again, but if she drank from the natural well she would thirst again (John 4:14).

There was a shift in the conversation when the woman asked for a drink of water from the natural well. All of a sudden Jesus asked her to call her husband. She acknowledged that she did not have a husband. This question and statement was not to embarrass or to judge her but to speak to her prophetically, letting her know that he knew her past, her present and what was destined for her future. God wanted her to know that worship is not limited by time and space, but worship can take place at anytime, anywhere and with anyone. When people are born of the Spirit they can commune with God ceaselessly. Worship is the matter of the heart. Truth is what is in harmony with the nature and will of God. It is the opposite of all that is false. If we are to worship God in spirit and in truth, then the truth is God is love. God's love transcends every lie and deception that is told through the misinterpretation of God's word.

What does the Spirit have to do with abuse? The Spirit of God is divine, which brings man into relationship with God and then creates a love relationship between God and man. The relationship between God and man creates a godly relationship between male and female. Love is not overbearing. Jesus did not use his authority in his encounter with the woman at the well.

Jesus broke three Jewish customs: first, he spoke to a woman; second, she was a Samaritan woman, a group the Jews traditionally despised; and third, he asked her to get him a drink of water, which would have made him ceremonially unclean from using her cup. This shocked the woman. Then Jesus told the woman he could give her "living water" so that she would never thirst again. Jesus used the words living water to refer to

eternal life, the gift that would satisfy her soul's desire. At this point she was given a profound sense of what God intended for her life, that she would have life and that more abundantly. Her joy was in God and not in man. She was not to be misused or abused. She was to be appreciated and loved and respected and honored. It did not take five men to get the job done. There was only one man who could fulfill every need that she would ever have. The revelation knowledge introduced through the Spirit ignites truth which causes freedom. As the Samaritan woman's soul became satisfied, then her heart and emotions would be satisfied as well.

Although they had never met before, it was revealed that Jesus knew she had five husbands and was now living with a man who was not her husband. He now had her attention! As they talked about their two views on worship, the woman voiced her faith that the messiah was coming. Jesus answered, "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:26). As the woman began to grasp the reality of her encounter with Jesus, the disciples returned. They were equally shocked to find him speaking to a woman. The Samaritan woman became the first female evangelist. Leaving behind her water jar, the woman returned to town and invited the people to "come, see a man who told me all that I ever did" (John 4:29).

True worship is not confined to what we do in church or open praise (although these things are both good, and we are told in the Bible to do them). True worship is the acknowledgment of God and all his power and glory in everything we do. Like loving our neighbor as ourselves, treating others as we want to be treated, showing ourselves friendly if we want a friend, and doing unto others as we would have them do unto us, the highest form of praise and worship is obedience to God and his Word. 1 John 4:7 pushes

this concept a little deeper when John admonishes, “Beloved let us love one another for love is of God and everyone that loveth is born of God and he that loveth not knoweth not God.” To do this, we must know God. We cannot be ignorant of him; to know him is to worship him. Worship is to glorify and exalt God—the best way we can do this is by being peacemakers, having a pure heart, being meek and not weak, occasionally being poor in spirit, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and being merciful that we might obtain mercy. These actions exemplify the sacrifice of praise. This is worship. As we spend more time with God, our relationship with him becomes stronger. The more you pray, the deeper the love goes, and the deeper the love goes, the more you want to please God. The intentional behavior in our mortal bodies repels the desire to hurt, mishandle or exploit one of God’s children.

### **Sermon Series 3: Where do I go from here?**

II Samuel 13:1-20

We all know the story concerning the rape of Tamar, David’s only daughter. Tamar was raped by David’s oldest son Amnon. The story is told reminding the reader that these two siblings have different mothers. They are half brother and sister. Is it any less incestuous? The blood line flows from the father’s genes. Is it any less wrong because Amnon’s loins were raging and his sister was beautiful? He would be the next king. He could do what he wanted to, but he could not contain his uncontrollable desires. Who was going to challenge the son of the present king? Amnon did not have to question his morality because he was encouraged to follow his unlawful instincts to rape his sister by his cousin Jonadab.

It was not enough for Amnon and Jonadab to conspire this madness. They also incorporated a third party. They used David to convince Tamar to go to Amnon's house to cook for her sick brother. When she brought the food near him to eat, he took hold of her and said, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile" (2 Samuel 13:12). Amnon crossed boundaries that no man should ever cross. Now he wants her to get out. The obsessive love that Amnon had for Tamar is now massive hatred. Amnon destroyed the life of his only sister. He stole her virginity, disrespected her and threw her out like dirty dishwater. She has now been raped and rejected, and severely damaged mentally, physically and emotionally with nowhere to go. Tamar said to Amnon, "No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away it is greater than the other that you did to me" (2 Samuel 13:16). But he would not listen to her.

He called the young man who served him and said, "Put this woman (she was now this woman) out of my presence, and bolt the door after her" (2 Samuel 13:17). Tamar is in turmoil as she asks, "As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel" (2 Samuel 13:13). So Amnon's servant put her out and bolted the door after her. Shame causes Tamar to put ashes on her head and tear the long robe that she was wearing; she put her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went. Her brother Absalom said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? Be quiet for now, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this to heart" (2 Samuel 13:20). So Tamar remained a desolate woman in her brother Absalom's house.

There is an old saying, "Oh what tangled webs we weave when we practice to deceive." The outcome of sin is always worse than the entrance into it. In two years Amnon was dead at the hands of Absalom. How many Tamar's are sitting in this congregation today? How many lives have been destroyed by uncontrollable lust? How many women have no place to carry their shame? Who can they tell? Will they be accused of being in the wrong place at the wrong time? Even when the truth is known, will the perpetrator be reprimanded for his behavior?

We know that for every cause there is an effect. Included in this sermon you were given handouts of a tree with negative attributes on it. These characteristics stem from negative seeds planted by molestation and rejection which can cause bitterness. From the roots of the tree you see in your handouts the ill effects that can plague the lives of many past, present and hopefully not future Tamar's of the world. The same tree can influence the behavior of the men women choose to love.

This does not have to be the end. We know that knowledge is power and today we have taken a powerful step. As part of this sermon series we have attempted to expose every deterrent to the healing of those who have been wounded or stagnated by the Amnon and Jonadab culprits in our lives. With this information applied to our lives we are now equipped to be restored. For everything that the cankerworm, the palmerworm, the locust, and the caterpillar has stolen God will restore. Ladies where do we go from here? As we stand together and unite our efforts and our voices we will say as Sam Cooke said, "I know a change going to come!" Blessings and strength to you all! May the peace of God rest, rule and abide with you always!

## Sermon Series 4: Alert! Alert! Alert!

Ephesians 5:21-33

Ephesians 5: 21: Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

As a woman of faith I have always been taught that there is something honorable in wives submitting themselves to their husbands. This meant that as a wife you took the low road, somewhat docile, compliant, meek, and unassuming. Not that these are bad attributes, but it took away the level ground, making the man's ground higher than the woman's ground. In the spirit of the word hierarchy the man has maintained a sense of superiority. As we look at the word submit Ephesians 5:22 has always been the lead scripture for the admonishing of women to obey their husbands: Wives submit yourselves unto your own husband as unto the lord for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the savior of the body.

The problem with this scripture is the fact that Ephesians 5:21 and 25 are left out. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God and Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." These two scriptures bring a different element to what women have been taught concerning the word submit. The balance in the relationship is left out when you omit any scripture in reference to this word. The word can be turned into anything we want it to say if we cut and paste scripture.

With that being said, submission is an act of giving out of desire not of demand. When the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, most women don't mind cooperating with their spouses. When a woman is overlooked and talked down to she

feels like a piece of gum under a man's shoe. I am assured that is not what Paul or God meant to convey to the man or the woman as the word submit was being tossed around. Submitting yourself to one another is a harmonious act with a rhythm that maintains a beat that goes on and on. Far too long has the word submit been misrepresented in the order of relationships. Because of this misrepresentation men have taken a superior stance, not only in the home but in the church as well. Although there are more women in the church than there are men, women are still given subservient positions in the church. Many churches still believe that the pulpit holds a level of superiority that is not extended to women. If Christ does not force us to love him or to worship him then what gives man the audacity that he has the authority to force others into a certain behavior?

The Bible teaches that in the Spirit women are equal with men, and each must submit unto Jesus as their spiritual head. In the Spirit, Jesus Christ is the head. Men are to love their wives like Jesus loves the church. He laid his life down for her. Men who are demanding that their wives submit to them have not learned the right way to win them and that is to love them with the love of the Lord. The church must reexamine or examine the thrust behind their meaning of the word submit. Why is it so important to keep women under foot? What are they afraid of? It should be more important that the woman is a partner, a helpmeet as God ordained in Genesis. God took the woman out man's side from his rib. Then said she is flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone. How can a man mistreat his own flesh? Mutual subjection to the word of God is to love your wife as Christ loves the church. Christ gave his life for the church.

This should be the spirit of man to give life rather than take a life, blessing rather abusing, healing rather hurting. God's DNA should dominate the behavior of Christian

men. The Greek word *hupotasso*, as it relates to members of the church interacting with each other, is a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden. When Paul instructs the Ephesians to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" it is clear that he is speaking in the sense of "arranging under" or "yielding to admonition or advice." He isn't telling people to obey each other. In 1 Corinthians 16:16 when Paul calls on the Corinthians to submit to "everyone who cooperates in the work," it is clear there is no sense of hierarchy. There was a reason God took the woman from the man's side and called her a "helpmeet." They could walk together side by side on level ground in peace and harmony.

Ladies as we bring this sermon series to a close, I admonish you don't let another day go by without telling your story to help someone step out of the shadows of abuse. We must shine a light so that victims can become victorious. As survivors we can help others become victorious too by the power that is in our voice. Walk with someone else as they travel the journey of abuse. Maintain their confidentiality, pray for your sisters, pray with your sisters. Take someone by their hand to a meeting, and bring them to a support group. Join us in a workshop. We are reminded in the scripture that the strong shall bear the infirmities of the weak.

It also says when you have been strengthened, strengthen your brother. We all need help. This is not a journey that we can take alone, but if we take a hand and someone puts their hand in another hand the link will be strong, the power will be great, and the effect will resonate around the globe. There is power in the room. We can't afford to let another one of our family members die because we are ashamed. We are more than conquerors. We are overcomers. God saved for such a time as this to serve

others. We have more in common than any of us realize. With that we will rise to eradicate domestic violence in our communities. Peace and blessings to you all.

### **Workshops and support groups**

The program lasted from August to October (See Appendix B). Lynn Howard shared her expertise on “Changing Faces,” making known the resources available through her organization, such as a place to take off the mask of emotional and physical pain in a safe environment. This organization offers expression through writing and individual professional counseling, as well as a place for adolescents and young women ages eleven to eighteen.

Dr. Tiffany Dent (Monford Dent Consulting & Psychological Services, LLC.) presented a support group training titled the “Sisters of Tamar.” Others were invited to share this training with women in their individual churches.

Lavon Donagon Bradley of HYPE coordinated a summit titled “Don’t Judge Me.” Lavon teaches how to resolve life issues to the young and old who have been and or are involved in abusive relationships.

Finally, for our training project we sent out a “Domestic Violence Alert” inviting every church in the city of Columbus to join Oakley Full Gospel in efforts to eradicate the ugly demon of violence in the church. In lieu of October being domestic violence month and the recent focus on former Baltimore Ravens’ running back Ray Rice, it was the opportune time to launch this project.

The sermon that was used to culminate the ministry portion of the project focused on the misrepresentation of the word *submission* as it is misused in the book of Ephesians

5: 20-25 (See Appendix C). It was interesting to see how many women responded to my request and the requests of the contextual associates to be interviewed and to later participate in the domestic violence alert. The plea went out to every woman who has ever been abused or knows someone who has experienced any form of abuse.

Acknowledging that there is a "Holy Hush" in the church, we asked every man, woman and girl to share their story with someone they knew experiencing the same situation.

Church and faith play a major role in the lives of women.

The church must remember the words of Robin Stone, author of *No Secrets, No Lies*.

Stone reminds us that most substance abuse starts with sexual abuse. Abuse is the catalyst for many other forms of negative behavior. We must expose the Holy hush that so many are ashamed to share in the church. In order to express this in a profound way, we invited vendors to bring information and resources from their organizations. As a major concern participants were reassured that they would receive the highest level of confidentiality. This was also expressed to every facilitator.

Contextual associates were major participants in making this project successful. The support groups were on Thursdays at one hour intervals from seven to eight in the evening. The time in these group sessions was therapeutic for those in attendance. The women were given the opportunities to be open and honest concerning areas that they have otherwise been in denial about for many years.

Professional associate Dr. Dent shared pertinent information for successful support groups, keeping the numbers between eight and twelve. She reminded participants of their role in the group. She also helped to establish ice breakers to get the group participants involved in the conversation without feelings of intimidation.

There was also foundational information from the psychological standpoint concerning the introduction to abuse. All participants were agreeable and followed the criteria set before them. The church also has a responsibility to hold the abuser accountable, to admonish him, to judge (that is, to investigate and discern right from wrong), and to encourage the abuser to change his/her ways. John Creswell informs the reader that “mixed methodology is more than simply collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative research. Two important components in each definition are that the approach to research involves philosophical assumptions as well as distinct methods or procedures.”<sup>3</sup>

The support groups have consisted of two contextual associates and twelve women who vacillated from week to week. These women were also a part of a larger group of seventy-five women, as well as four men who participated in what will be an annual “Domestic Violence Alert” program in October. One hundred invitations were sent out to churches in Ohio. Two hundred and forty-five women were invited to the “Don’t Judge me!” symposium. Young men and women were also invited to attend and participate.

### Outcome

Realizing that outcome is a change in knowledge, attitude, skill behavior, expectation and emotional status of life circumstances, the same test was used for the post-test as the pre-test. Survivors came from different life experiences and were at

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<sup>3</sup> John Creswell, *Research Design: Mixed Methods Research*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA:SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009), 5.

different levels of knowledge. It was an easy task determining outcome. Those who were ill informed now were well informed and those who had some knowledge increased their knowledge. Attendees completing the pre and post-questionnaire exiting the project had a better overall understanding of domestic violence and the resources available to them. Their understanding included how this problem affects not only their lives but the lives of their family and friends and especially their children.

The support groups were a huge success, giving victims an opportunity to reveal the hidden secrets that they may have carried around for another decade. On occasion we would have a visitor show up because of the testimony from one of the participants. Breakthroughs took place as the weight of silence was broken and healing occurred.

Seventy-five people were in attendance for the two workshops that had no age limit or gender status. Although it was a last minute decision, it was very successful. Those in attendance were challenged to look at life from a different perspective, to think before acting. A necessary part of this program was to generate involvement from community resources.

Women were willing to be interviewed and share their stories, believing if they shared their stories other women would feel free to tell their stories. The ultimate experience for me was the marriage ceremony that was performed with seven women's commitment to marrying themselves to God. God is the ultimate of what all husbands should be marriage.

Every concerned attendee maintained the same focus and that is to equip the religious community through training, support groups and the word of God. The marketing tools were letters to churches, radio spots, flyers, and emails. The program

lasted from July to October, five months (See Appendix B). Introductory survey material was handed out at the first meeting to establish the need and understanding of each participant.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Upon completion of quantitative and qualitative research, the results supply needed information that will produce a quality model in Columbus. Exploring the level of need along with the avenues of information and support, I have the reassurance that this project is greatly needed and it will also continue to grow and be greatly supported. In respect to the time constraints for the implementation of this project, I will gather various forms of data to expedite the process. Support groups convened for a period of five weeks, creating a thorough understanding concerning common awareness:

- Raise awareness about domestic abuse by ensuring it is regularly mentioned
- Seek out places to discuss issues discreetly and become educated (within the church)
- Develop understanding of domestic abuse and related issues
- Shatter the Silence: Speak out
- No Shame, No Blame
- Define the perpetrator ( you did not make him do it)
- Know your worth
-

- Understanding the psychological aspects of the abuser and the abused<sup>4</sup>

Violent perpetrators are motivated by a complex range of factors: psychological, familial, economical, political, environmental, and social.

Social structures have maintained the status quo of centuries of women's low status. Even as these societies undergo change, they are a powerful force in legitimizing violence against women and making it invisible. There are multiple dimensions that interact with one another to make violence so common in women's lives in the United States and globally. It is difficult to eradicate. Violence against women inflicts tremendous cost and consequences in all countries and societies. Although wonderful changes have taken place in the last twenty years, violence against women is no longer hidden or misunderstood to the same degree as in the past.<sup>5</sup>

A very important factor for this project is the relief in knowing that safe places are available, the safe places which should be our churches. When asked why many go to church, the answers were for worship, because it is therapeutic, it gives spiritual release, for guidance and clarity, to increase faith and for the preached word of God. Social service agencies can only work to a certain point, but an effective, loving church brings forth another element of power. Corporate prayer persistently and privately meets the daily needs to move the victim to victory. Love and encouragement that has come from Christian influence has empowered individual women to transition from victims to survivors.

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<sup>4</sup> Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade, Our History Future* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1989), 168-169.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Anne Hildebrand, educator, social worker, at seminary consortium in Winnipeg, 1993. Pp.302.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTION, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The major objective of this project was to increase awareness of domestic violence within the congregations of Oakley Full Gospel Baptist Church, as well as other churches in Columbus, OH. It was hypothesized that with the involvement of the religious communities there would be a major breakthrough concerning this issue. Social service agencies and victim advocates welcomed the idea of collaboration with the church. The women who participated in the project became more educated, which helped move them in the direction of healing. As a survivor of domestic violence it has been a joy for me to minister, to pray for, and to interview the participants in this project.

The most rewarding part of this project was the marriage ceremony that took place as the women participated in the Inner Healing/Silent Hurting workshop, which culminated with a marriage ceremony to God. Realizing that God is a God of love, the kind of love that only God can give, our plumb line for love should be 1Corinthians 13. Anything that does not measure up to this description should be dismissed. This workshop also focused on the strongholds of un-forgiveness. The examples of the roots of bitterness and rejection provide a foundation for the many behavioral traits that are established during very early stages in the lives of those who have been abused. The truth of God's definition of love will cause most women to understand their worth as they

reevaluate their value. The women who participated in the support groups also participated in the sermon series, as well as the finale of the domestic violence alert. The support groups, interviews, workshops, and sermon series provided the information that was needed to validate the data acquired through the pre- and post-test surveys. The collaboration between educated facilitators, professional social service workers, and clergy stimulated healing and wholeness to those who have been wounded.

### Unity in the Community

Social services are limited without the church. The church is limited without social services and facilitators are limited without them both. The combination of the three will produce a greater sense of trust within the church community. The desire of the women was reinforced by the survey to have support from the Christian community. The overall consensus was that the involvement of the church would give credence to the fact that God does not condone abuse of any kind. With the proper exegesis of the scripture and the affirmation from the Christian community, the women could move consistently forward. There was negativity that came from one person who visited one meeting, otherwise, there was great harmony among the women. The support groups were effective and the interviews were helpful. It would have been an added bonus to have other counselors doing one-on-ones with the participants. The participants want to continue with the support groups, and the domestic alert will be an annual event that will take place in the month of October. In retrospect, more light should have been on the perpetrators and their part in the healing process for those who have been damaged through their abuse. It would also have been productive if the men who attended the domestic violence alert would have been involved early on in order to get a dual

perspective on this issue. The symposium that was done by HYPE (Helping Young People & Parents Excel) brought major focus to the youth in the community. With this type of participation from our youth, major intervention can take place before any damage is done. This project has generated major interest in the area of domestic violence, and I have been asked to be a speaker at different churches, symposiums and conferences. Although we have barely scratched the surface in order to eradicate domestic violence, it is known that there is a project moving in that direction in the city of Columbus. While researching this project it was discovered that there are many areas that the church needs to explore. Studies show that along with traditional methods there are also creative and artistic ways to approach abuse. Moving forward I believe that church participation facilitates forgiveness and wholeness and provides a strengthened relationship between the abused and the church. The church must become a cohesive front that will cause what has happened in the last year to continue.

The church must display a level of righteous indignation against this epidemic that has plagued secular and Christian families. I find it dangerous for those who walk in ignorance of the reality that domestic violence is alive and well in the church. The ignorance of the powers that be infects and afflicts harmful information and behavior onto those who need help. Are we not the present day prophets who must continue to sound the alarm, shout the alert? Although this project has come to an end and the time constraints limited us to minimal effectiveness, it does not mean that we will not continue to move forward. This project has opened doors for deeper levels of advocacy opportunities. In the past six months opportunities in abundance have presented

themselves for panel discussions, speaking engagements, workshops and seminars. Opportunities are being presented on a continual basis.

### New Directions

The contextual associates Karen Ferguson and Jenita Johnson, along with me, are moving in the direction of establishing domestic violence programs in and out of the church. The direction is to establish a 501c 3 non-profit organization that will eventually possess the resources to provide multiple services to women and children in need of housing, clothing, furniture and other necessities. The Domestic Violence Alert for this year is in the early planning stages. The support groups have gone from weekly to continuous monthly meetings. At this point the objective is to increase the number of participants in these meetings. We will also extend an open door to those who may not be ready to participate in monthly meetings but will come to a scheduled private meeting.

In retrospect, it is realized that this epidemic is no longer a late teen, early adulthood problem, but it is an early childhood, male-female problem. There is no way to heal the women without healing the men. If we do not start with our children, we will continue to be more reactive than proactive. With this information the scope of those who will be targeted will begin with bringing awareness to our children, teens and men. The sooner we begin to educate our children and involve our men who are willing to become educated, the greater impact we will have on our society. As I approached this project the total focus was to inform the church of its negligence concerning domestic violence.

This project allowed to me to realize that not only is this a Christian problem, but it is also a human problem that affects the Christian community. The domestic violence problem does not care at what age it inflicts its poison onto a human life. There is a need to be proactive in this process. This gives way for every Christian who has been called to stand in the gap for those who cannot stand for themselves to preach, teach, pray and holler if necessary against this curse. It is the intention of this group of women to provoke other women, other organizations, and other churches to godly jealousy to become agents of change for domestic violence everywhere, beginning with the church. The contextual associate has already implemented a book club that will educate while establishing a different level of interest and increase numbers in attendance for the support groups. The relationships that have been established through the process of this project will continue to enhance the growth of the ministry as we move forward from project to permanence.

#### Season of Prayer

*To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: 2 A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; 3 A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; 4 A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; -*

*Ecclesiastes 3:1*

In reflection of this journey I am reminded of the divine interventions of God's strength, love and mercy. It is through this reflection that I am also reminded of my past failures, struggles and successes. Moving forward sometimes means taking time to reflect on yesterday in order to be successful for tomorrow. Prayer and meditation mixed with reflection brings clarity for future progress. Something special happens when time is

set aside to fast and pray. With that being said, prayer and meditation must be a viable part of the future of this ministry. It is the strength and power of God that continues to be a major influence concerning the direction of this project. The spiritual movement of God will continue to be a light unto my path and a lamp unto my feet. Prayer has been the glue that has sealed a bond between me and my colleagues as we consistently seek the will of God in moving forward in our endeavors. The Holy Spirit is always invited into our meetings, services and conversations as we seek the divine direction of God. Our first strategy planning meeting was saturated with the power of God. We will continue to trust in the Lord with all of our hearts, not leaning to our own understanding, but in all our ways acknowledging him that he may direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5).

As previously stated in this chapter, this project has become a ministry at Oakley Full Gospel Church in Columbus. The opportunity to bring awareness to others concerning the problem of domestic violence and how to determine the signs is a blessing. The ability to share resources, bring in professional experts on this subject, and provide a Christian environment for the abused is very satisfying. The opportunity to train, teach and share experiences has created a desire to write a book on this subject, coupled with a workbook which will allow the abused to heal through reflection. Workshops and training are part of my DNA. Experiencing the deliverance of many as they transition from trauma to triumph is powerful. There is so much power in the Inner Healing/Silent Hurting workshops as souls are delivered from lifelong baggage. The marriage ceremony was a part of the project, but it has now become a part of the workshop.

Very few churches are open to this subject so it is a major breakthrough to have a pastor who embraces the reality of domestic violence in the church. The Domestic Violence Alert is now an annual event which will take place for the second time this year in October, which is Domestic Violence month.

Moving into the position as the director of the Church Federation and Inter-faith organization, there is great opportunity to share the need for other churches to get involved with domestic violence. Continuous advocacy training through the Sisters of Tamar, Sarnes sexual assault training, The Salvation Army human trafficking, bridges of poverty training, quarterly workshops, and retreats provides ongoing education and avenues to enhance the direction of this ministry. The objective is to assure those that seek help, whether in a group or individually, that there is a service available for them.

In the process of writing this paper pre-teens and teenagers became a concern, realizing that there are too many young girls who have been molested and their innocence has been stolen. Realizing that Tamar was a teenager when she was raped stirred memories about personal situations as well as other young girls who are abused far too early in their lives. The effects of abuse show up in different ways in children. Depending on the age of the children and their mental status, children's response to abuse can cause them to operate in fear as well as engage in adverse behavior.

As a ministry there is a need to be proactive to our pre-teens and teens realizing the level of detriment and its affect. It is a reality that babies are being abused at the ages of one, two and three. Talking with parents and child care providers, children are being abused and experiencing violence at earlier ages. With this information and past experiences, it is a must that this ministry extends its focus to our children and teens as

we move forward. Becoming educated in the previous areas is a must in order to create preventive measures and safe havens for our younger community as well.

With the established relationships within the local schools, department of corrections and juvenile centers educational and empowerment workshops will continue to develop for our youth. Principals and teachers are requesting speakers within the group to come into the schools with not only information, but consistency and follow-up. The speakers must be knowledgeable in order to answer questions and do referrals if needed. The education for our teens and pre-teens is a welcomed resource which is often opposing from our churches.

As the pre-test and post-test questions were presented concerning the receptivity of the church regarding domestic violence, the answers were consistently negative. The challenges of crossing the threshold of the church continue to be great but so is the determination for the success of establishing domestic violence awareness in the church. Throughout this project it has been stated that pastors deny the fact that domestic violence exists in many churches. With consistency, determination and prayer, inroads are being made. Monthly letters inviting churches to join in our fight to eradicate violence in the church will continue. Quarterly blubs on the radio will be run, and the rally for women to raise their voices will not cease. The belief that this is a God-ordained issue that should be addressed by clergy says to continue to research other options. We will seek out other churches that have embraced the reality of domestic violence. This encompasses continued development of partnerships, continual networking, and participating in everything and anything that opens another door to bringing awareness to domestic violence in the church.

In conclusion, it has been found that in the biblical, historical and theological foundations there are many references to the negative realities of domestic violence. There are different methods for providing a solution to this matter, and it is also imperative that the Bible is used in the proper context. Moving forward day by day and step by step, we continue to move in the direction of education, training and healing. Every abuser must be accountable for his actions. Every woman must know that she is more than a conqueror, that she is above and not beneath, and that Adam called her bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. She is not only a part of the outer (flesh) but she is a part of the structure of man (bone). With this being said, if a man seeks to destroy the woman in essence he is seeking to destroy himself, because out of him created God them!

**APPENDIX A**  
**PROJECT TIMELINE**

**AUGUST14 –OCTOBER 19**

## Project timeline

August 14 \_\_\_\_\_ Participant recruiting:

Spraggins Pre-test survey-consent form: What is domestic violence?

August 16 \_\_\_\_\_ Launching sermon

series 1: What's Love got to do with it? Everything: Betty Spraggins

September 4 \_\_\_\_\_ Support group

Training: Dr. Tiffany Dent/Jenita Johnson

September 6 \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon 2: Worship: Betty

Spraggins

September 11: \_\_\_\_\_ Support Group: Karen

Ferguson

September 20: \_\_\_\_\_ Symposium: HYPE:

Lavon

September 25: \_\_\_\_\_ Support Group: Jenita

Johnson

October 4: \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon 3: Where do we

go from here?

October 11: \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon 3: Where do

we go from here? : Spraggins

October 14: \_\_\_\_\_ Workshop/support group Lynn  
Howard: Changing faces. Inner Healing-Silent Hurting- Marriage Ceremony

October 18: \_\_\_\_\_ Domestic Violence Alert:

**APPENDIX B**  
**CONFIDENTIALITY CONSENT FORM**

### Consent Form

My Name is Betty Spraggins, I am working on my Doctorate of Ministry Degree at United Theological Seminary: which focuses on Domestic Violence in the Church.

Study Title: Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church  
Research Investigator Betty Spraggins (Advisors: Dr. Robert Walker, Dr. Kenneth Cummings)  
Doctoral Program: Prophetic Preaching and Praxis

My Contact information: United Theological Seminary bspraggins@united.edu 317-397-5302

The purpose of this study is to see how we can get the Pastors of our churches more involved in the issues that surround Domestic Violence. The survey is for Pastors, Pastor's wives and the congregation at large. I will be available to engage in conversation with any one that is willing to discuss this issue. I will answer any question concerning this project.

This study involves the quantitative and qualitative research that is required for my dissertation

This study will be combined with other studies and research to check the pulse of the receptivity for domestic violence education, training and awareness in the church. .

This study will take approximately six-seven weeks: at weekly one hour intervals all participation is voluntary, the time of participation will be handled with the utmost discretion. You will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. All information will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only

Participation in this study is voluntary. No compensation will be paid to any of the participants.

You are free to refuse to participate in this research project or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time without penalty

*My signature below indicates that all my questions have been answered. I agree to participate in the project as described above.*

---

Signature of Subject Date Signed

*A copy of this form has been given to me.* \_\_\_\_\_ Subject's Initials  
I believe he/she understands the contents of the consent document and is competent to give.

Elder Betty Spraggins \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Responsible Investigator Date Signed

**APPENDIX C**  
**LETTER OF INVITATION**

ALERT!      ALERT!      ALERT!

Increasing Awareness of Domestic Violence in the Church

The Women of New Birth Christian Ministries

In light of all the recent media attention about celebrities involved in domestic violence, the community must realize that domestic violence happens every day to the non-celebrity. The cases that are not in the media are happening in private homes and in our churches and we ignore until it becomes a public issue. Domestic abuse is prevalent in all types of relationships. It does not discriminate and it affects the victim's family and friends. This is not a cultural issue it is a humanitarian concern.

- Every 9 seconds a woman is assaulted or beaten
- Around the world 1 in every 3 women have been beaten in their life time
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women, more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined
- Every day in the US more than 3 women are murdered by their husband or boyfriend
- **10,000,000 + children witness some form of domestic violence annually** wants to bring a deeper sense of reality to an ongoing epidemic by inviting you to

**“DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ALERT”**

**New Birth Christian Ministries**

**Columhus, Ohio 43118**

**Sunday, October 19, 2014 at 5:00 pm**

**Speaker: Elder Betty Spraggins**

**There is nothing more intimidating than the threat of abuse which comes in many forms!!!!**

If you would like to participate in this event, please contact us for further information.  
LIMITED BOOTHS ARE AVAILABLE!!!!!!

**Please RSVP by October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**614-236-9080 Ext. 432**

**Please Wear Purple in Honor of National Domestic Violence Month**

God Bless, God's Servant

Jenita Johnson

**APPENDIX D**  
**SEMINARS-WORKSHOPS-CEREMONY**



Founder: Lynn Howard

Co-Founder: Bobby Howard

Changing lives one voice at a time.

#### Services Provided

- Encouragement & Empowerment
- Group Discussions – Adolescents and women  
(Ages 11-18)
- Individual Counseling (Professional)
- Expressions through writing (Poetry)
- Awareness to schools, social events and churches

*You are not a victim, No matter what you have been through, you are still here, you may have challenged hurt or betrayed, beaten and discouraged but nothing has defeated you. You are still here! You have been delayed but not denied. You are not a victim you are a victor. You have a history of victory —Steve Maraboli*

**Inner Healing**



**Silent Hurting**



Inner Healing/Silent Hurting

Developed by

Betty Spraggins/ Counselor-Advocate

Copyright 1999

## WHO AM I

## FORGIVENESS=HEALING

## TAKE TIME TO ANALYZE YOURSELF

Learn to Understand Yourself. It is the first step to understanding others. Before you can successfully interact with others, you need to answer (two) important questions:

- (1) WHO AM I? I a leader who helps solve problems, a leader who helps people get along, a take charge leader, a person who leads by example or a person who is able to combine these different leadership styles
- (2) WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

What are my goals, objectives, expectations, in working with this particular group/organization? What is the purpose of the group as a whole?

Identify areas for improvement. Taking a few minutes to answer these questions can help you to determine your strength and weaknesses.

- a) Do you try to be aware of how others think and feel?
- b) Do you try help others perform at the best of their abilities?
- c) Are you willing to take responsibility?
- d) Are you willing to try new ideas and new ways of doing things?
- e) Are you able to communicate with others effectively?
- f) Do you make it a point to offer or seek help whenever necessary?



## MARRIAGE CEREMONY



**APPENDIX E**  
**PRE-TEST/POST-TEST**

## ONE QUESTION SURVERY

## FAITH BASED ADVOCACY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What do you know about Domestic/Family Violence (Abuse)?

1. T        F        Domestic/Family Violence is an anger control issue?
2. T        F        Abusive relationships often have a predictable pattern?
3. T        F        Domestic/Family violence is about power and control?
4. T        F        Domestic/Family violence does not affect children?
5. T        F        Domestic/Family violence does affect society/community?
6. T        F        If an abused person leaves they are no longer in danger?
7. T        F        Abusive personalities often have warning signs?
8. T        F        Domestic/Family Violence is a personal issue/problem?
9. T        F        Domestic/Family Violence is only physical?
10. T        F        Abusive behaviors/abuse can become more severe over time?
11. T        F        Domestic Violence/abuse only happens to adults?
12. T        F        The elderly does not need to be concerned about abuse?
13. T        F        Bullying is not harmful, it is a child's rite of passage?
14. T        F        Teen abuse is just a scare tactic to keep teens from dating?
15. T        F        Domestic violence is a crime and punishable by law?
16. T        F        Domestic violence affects us all and ending it requires efforts from the entire community

## **How Prepared is Your Church to Serve Victims of Abuse**

### **Have sermons condemned abuse in the home?**

Has the pastor preached a full message on abuse or family violence?

When families are discussed, does the pastor mention that many families do not fit standard cultural and church ideals for family life?

### **Is abuse discussed in premarital counseling programs?**

Is printed information on abuse (such as brochures) given to all couples who undergo premarital counseling prior to their wedding?

Are couples asked whether there has ever been an incidence of violence in their relationship?

Are couples admonished to live violence free lives and offered suggestions for dealing with anger and disappointment?

### **Is dating violence discussed in youth groups?**

Has the youth pastor been informed about the prevalence and severity of dating violence even among church teens?

Has information on dating violence been provided in a place where a teen can see it in privacy?

Has the issue been raised from time to time in youth meetings, together with suggestions on how to respond to violence and how to help friends who have been abused?

### **Have you asked the shelter about its needs?**

Has a contact been made between the women's organization in your church and the nearest shelter for battered women?

Has the pastor ever called the shelter to inquire how the church might assist in its works? (e.g., painting a room moving a woman and her children, childcare, food treats at Christmas, spiritual counseling)?

## Faith Organization Response to Domestic Violence Quiz:

Never-0  
Rarely-1  
Sometimes-2  
Frequently-3

My faith leader openly preaches/speaks over the pulpit about domestic violence

Only in October  all month  2x  regularly during the year

My faith leader/organization uses the pulpit to sensitize the congregation about crime and victimization issues

My faith leader/organization is aware of referral resources, numbers etc. to assist a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault.

My faith understands guidelines for spiritual leaders responding to victims of crimes including domestic violence and sexual assault.

My faith leader/organization has established domestic violence advocacy support groups

My faith leader/organization encourages congregational participation in domestic advocacy groups

My faith publishes articles, newspapers, etc., enlightening the congregation about domestic violence

My faith leaders/organization openly displays domestic violence literature for congregants to read

My faith leader/organization has taken courses on crime victimization and crime victim assistance as well as pastoral counseling courses specifically related for domestic violence

My faith leader/organization has established staff courses on crime victimization for the clergy education and theological seminaries, including but worship and pastoral counseling courses

My faith leader/organization cooperates on all levels with victim assistance agencies and organizations to offer joint services to victims of crime and to disseminate publications on crime assistance.

**APPENDIX F**  
**PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

## INTERVIEW ONE

How old was I when I started to be molested? I was around 8 years old to the age of 14.

Who was I molested by? Several male family members but the worst of things was by my stepfather, who was a Deacon at our church at the time. And because I was threatened that if I said anything he would kill my family. Or if I said anything I would be the reason that our family would break up. I went from a child who loved school and on the honor roll to bad grades and withdrawn and fearful. I was raised in the church and was taught more about hell fire and damnation than the love of Christ. I was told all I had to do was trust God, be obedient, get good grades, don't lie, God hears and answer prayers. It was like as long as you do this God would do His part. But nobody said anything about love and forgiveness. At the time I was a member of a church that was of apostolic denomination. I had a hard enough time trying to explain why I wore skirts in the winter time. And the day my grandmother died was one of the worst days in my life. Because after she was called home things really got worse. And I could not believe that if God was real all the things that were happening would not be happening. And, shortly after I decided I was through with God. I prayed like they told me too, I trusted God, I felt like I had did all the church said do. And, yet God took my grandmother and I was being sexually, physically, emotionally and spiritually abused by the Deacon. And, later in my adult life I found out that the Pastor was using the Word of God to sleep with other women in the church. Needless, to say the church was not there to help me and nobody bothered to ask why my grades dropped, why I was withdrawn, or scared. And I will never forget the words my stepfather said while he was driving me to the Laundromat to help mother. With his left hand on the wheel and his right hand in my underwear he said, "I am just showing you what some man would do to you." After, he finished giving me a lesson in perversion 101 he told me don't you say nothing to your momma and gave me a candy bar. After several attempts of suicide and at the age of fourteen I finally told my mother and she did not believe me. She stated, when she asked him about it he said that I was lying on him because I was mad at him. Shortly after he left my mother for another woman and she almost lost her mind. I would learn that he started inessing with the other woman's ten year old daughter. And once the Pastor started counseling my mother and tried to kiss her that was the

end of church. What was left was a bitter, hateful, fearful, unforgiven, rebellious teenager who was stripped of love and trust drinking and getting high on drugs. I am so glad that is not how the story ends. After many years of not stepping into another church, not praying, not talking or trusting God the year of 1996 I heard His voice again. I am happy to say that that year I rededicated my life to Christ and we have been together ever since.

## INTERVIEW TWO

*This physical violence story started with simple jealousy and slight emotional abuse, but soon escalated into a serious abusive relationship, which I had to escape. This is my physical abuse story:* I met my boyfriend in the seventh grade. Like many young teens, I was excited to be in a relationship. I was attracted to him because he was older, smart and interesting. But in my naiveté, I didn't realize that he was also controlling. He told me what to wear, who to be friends with and where to go. He monopolized me completely. I thought I was in love, so I ignored the disapproval of my mom and others who cared about me.

After graduation, we moved in together, I became pregnant with my first daughter at the age of 14. I was convinced that I was in love and happy; that we were a family. I felt forced to choose, and decided I didn't want my family in my life for the sake of my own "happiness." The abusive situation became apparent to everyone but me and the psychological abuse became physical.

My abuser accused me of cheating and told me that no one else was going to love me as much as he did; that I would never be good enough for anyone else. I started to believe I was really worthless. Every time I tried to end the relationship he would stalk me, smash up the little I did have, and then say he would change. I discovered the abuse also won't stop even if your perpetrator often acts contrite, cries, apologizes, promises you it will never happen again and buys flowers for you after an abusive episode. He needs help to set limits on his behavior.

In 1987, the release came, the realization. It's not me . . . it's him. . . . I am worthy of love, God's and man's. One spring morning, my heart was filled with hope and with fear now only of starting over on my own. And so again I walked . . . down the hallway of our apartment building . . . never again to be silent. . . never again to live with that kind of violence, to suffer that kind of pain.

To my surprise, the second encounter with this disease occurred during the period of 2007 – 2014. My ex-husband was a minister/leader in a popular church. As a matter of fact, he was the executive assistant to the pastor. We were married for twenty-two an one half years. The last 7 years he became very abusive. He was first emotionally and verbally abusive, then physically abusive. The church members did not believe that he was abusive because he is so "nice" and "popular."

At home he was a tyrant who bullied and abused his wife, but in the pulpit, he was transformed into a godly man whom the congregation respected and adored. He was compassionate and gave 100 percent of himself to the congregation, but at home he was out of control. No one knew about our pain, it was a family secreted. My ex-husband was protected by the church and he had two personalities: warm and affectionate in public, and cruel and mean in the home.

How domestic violence affected my children? Whether or not children are physically abused, they often suffer emotional and psychological trauma from living in homes where their fathers abuse their mothers. Due to my abuse, my children were denied the

kind of home life that fosters healthy development or teaching them that violence is an effective way to resolve conflicts and problems. I was endangering my life and those of my children because abuse often escalates. I dealt with guilt, because I remained in the abusive marriage, I taught my daughters, to take abuse passively, that might makes right, and implicitly that God condones out-of-control rage and violence. Witnessing domestic violence is the single best predictor of juvenile delinquency and it was the number one reason my youngest daughter kept running away from home.

"Why didn't I leave? I think a lot of it had to do with being a Christian woman. I often felt compelled to stay in the abusive relationship by scripture mandating me to submit to my husband or turn the other cheek. In addition, economic dependency and public opinion play a very important role in not leaving. After all, what would the people think? We both were ministers and our marriage was expected to be an example for other married couples.

I sought help from my pastor, the church because it's supposed to be a safe place. Besides in dealing with people who abuse, the pastor/church ministers need to hold them accountable for their behavior. They can support the abusive person as he/she seeks specialized counseling to change their abusive behavior.

However, his lack of response and close association with my ex-husband gave the appearance that he denied the abuse was happening or minimize it or he was unable to provide adequate counseling to the both of us. I was devastated, hurt and left to walk this painful journey without the support of my spiritual father.

In conclusion, although we would like to think otherwise, abuse happens in pastors' homes. Almost any Christian counselor can confirm this, yet silence — as seen by the lack of research on the subject — perpetuates the myth that a Christian minister would not abuse. The tragedy of such abuse is its double abuse of power: that of a spouse or parent and that of a church leader.

The silence must be broken. Pastors, leaders and people in the faith community must recognize the reality that domestic violence is happening in our congregations. We must not endorse abuse through our silence, lack of knowledge or behind a misinterpretation of scripture.

As a pastor of the Christian Church in the United States, I state as clearly and strongly as I can that violence inside or outside the home, is *never* justified. Violence in any form"—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal"—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well. I emphasize that no person is expected to stay in an abusive marriage.

As clergy, we have an awesome responsibility and duty before God to care for those God entrusts to us. We represent the hand of God. May we care for victims in a way that honors the integrity of the word of God and His kingdom purposes? And, may our hands reach out to help victims find help, hope and healing by responding with a collaborative approach so that victims are adequately and responsibly cared for.

I am free from violence. I am free from physical, emotional, verbal, psychological and economic abuse. Above all, I am free from fear. I have survived, but I have chosen *not* to be free from my past. Rather, I am using my past and my profound empathy to help other

women escape domestic violence. Today, as I write this, I am free; my domestic abuse story has come to an end. I have met the most amazing and caring man who means the world to me and has shown me what I have always wanted in a relationship. I know we have a great future to look forward to.

## INTERVIEW THREE

When did the abuse start?

I was abused in every way as a child by my mother. I grew up very fast, defiant. I have always been a big girl so I got involved with a young man, who appeared to be very gentle. He seemed very different from where I came from. I was emancipated at the age of 16. To stay away from my mother I married at 17 years old and became a parent at the same time. It was not long before he began to put his hands on me. He would cruel and intense things like bending my fingers. We had many verbal confrontations. If I said something that he didn't like he would hit me. The relationship got worse right before the relationship ended. The hit turned into beatings which got me evicted out of my apartment. I became homeless and very helpless in my rebellion, without a place to go, I had to go to the shelter. Believing that I didn't need help I left the shelter in two months. To survive I prostituted myself and at times prison was my home. For ten years I was angry and rebellious. The healing process didn't begin until I was 26 when someone invited me go to church with them. I began seeking God with intensity. Believing that I was whole or close to it I married again at the age of 27, in between this time I had a relationship with another abuser. Several years had passed and I thought I had stopped making bad choices. I now knew with God in my life and space between my last bad choices, I was ready for a real man in my life. My life turned around when I took some classes to improve myself professionally. Today I am still in the process of healing and I am in my late thirties. The way that I am healing is through the job that I have at a local domestic violence shelter and through my church where I am the women's ministry director. I am married to a man that is in church, but we have intense fellowships. I host bimonthly women's meetings. Bringing reality out of the word of God. Today I do my job affectively with the women I work with because of my own experiences. I better understand the struggles of others because of my own struggles. By the grace of God I better understand my mother's abuse because she was abused and suffered tremendously in her life. Today I am a mother of four, three boys ages 21, 13, and 9, and a daughter 15.

## INTERVIEW FOUR

Seventeen years ago I met a man named Mike, the brother a friend who I recently met. I talked to this man intensely on the phone for quite a while. I was a licensed cosmetologist when we met, after a month I physically met this man. I lived with my grandparents when I was 12 and became an alcoholic because they made moonshine. I sipped moonshine daily like it was water, I smoked cigarettes that were soaked in moonshine. My behavior changed by smoking these cigarettes and it showed up at the dinner table. I became an alcoholic and drug addict at an early age and had to go to rehab. I hooked up with mike at the age 37 when he was fresh out of prison. I should have ran immediately because he was abusive out the gate. The beatings were small but it didn't take him long to begin beating me from room to room nonstop. This would go on for days without any relief. We both were drug addicts. When the kids were able to call my parents he left and hid for days. When things had quieted down he came back with flowers and apologies. I formed a relationship with God at the age of 17, although it did not last long. I had heard about God but didn't know who this God was. I started going to church with my neighbors. God became my imaginary friend, my relationship with God came through reading and praying. I was seeking God through my drug addiction, me and my first husband did drugs. Everybody around me was doing drugs. I was 28 when my husband and I parted. I was on my own, partying, I met another man, another alcoholic, then another man who did drugs. God was still a presence in my life. God was trying to get my attention to stop the drug abuse and the partying. I got straight for a while until mike came along and turned my life upside down, but I let him. One day I realize something had to change. He came to my job looking for money, all I had was 300 dollars for the rent. He wanted the three hundred. He was going to kill us if I didn't give him the money. He was driving at the highest speed that he could. I just wanted to pay the rent and buy groceries but he wanted drugs. I have gotten down on floor and I am scared to death. He runs the truck into a huge tree and walks away with a scratch. I realized at this point that God had me. My knees were broken and I had to spend months in a wheel chair. At this point I was in the hands of God which brought about a good and warm feeling, although my memory was gone. By the time I get home things begin to come

back to me and I realize that he had done this on purpose. I am back in a cage, he doesn't want anyone around, not even my children. I had to escape, so while he is sleep, I throw my chair out of the window and go to a friend's house. The friend takes me to the shelter where I can be safe. I was on the waiting list for another long term shelter placement. I had to go to my sister's house in the country to wait for the placement. Although this man went to jail again, he got out in eight months. Today I am healing, in the process of getting my children back. With my children I get to see my grandchildren. For the first time in a long time I feel safe and healthy. I am in my own apartment with my family. My church has been very supportive in the ways they know how and that was with prayer and love. This has made all the difference in the world, they do not judge me. My church was scared because of the lack of knowledge concerning domestic violence.

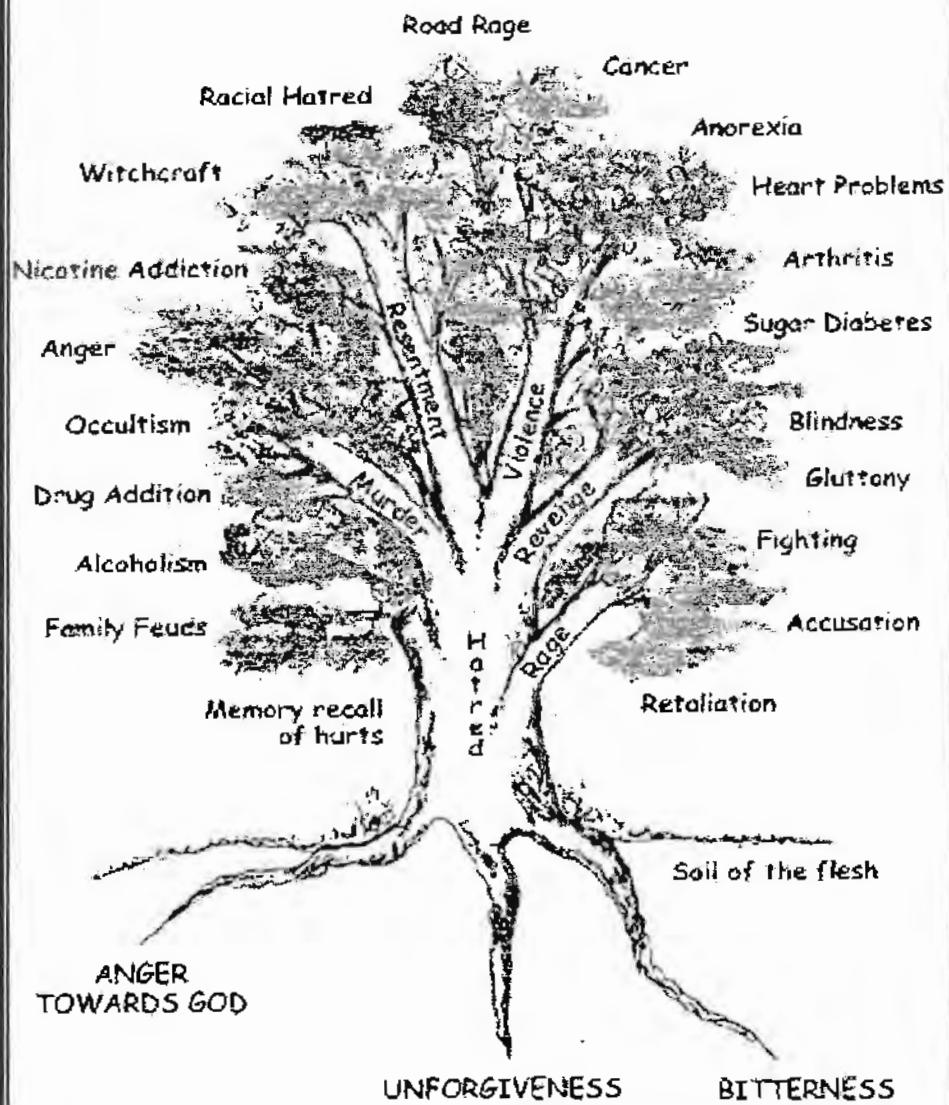
## INTERVIEW FIVE

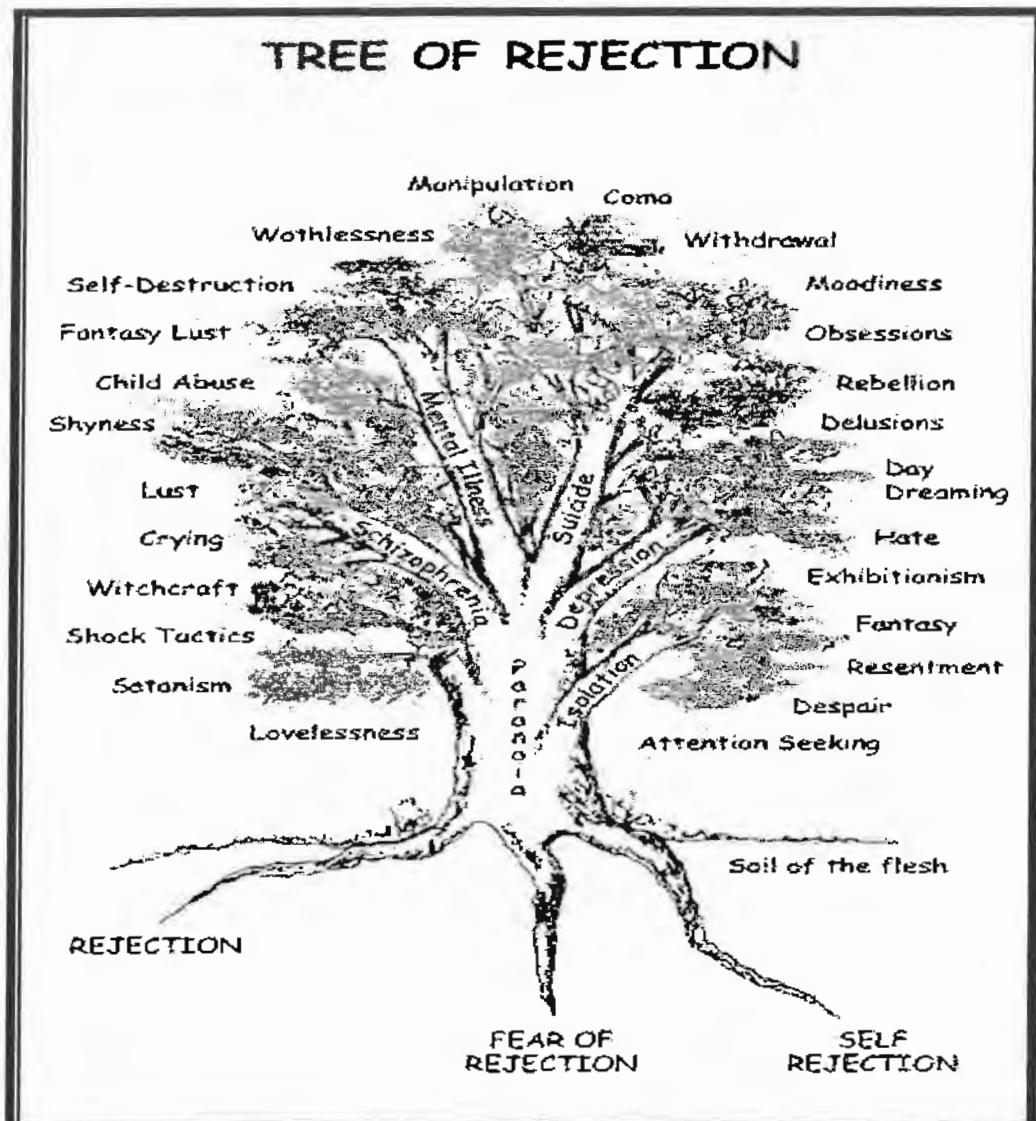
The violence began in my life when I got pregnant by my boyfriend. I had dated him for a year and a half. He showed no evidence of violence until I got pregnant. When I first got pregnant I was living him and family members. He left me with the family members and would only come by for appointments. I really wanted my own place, he was not around much because he was on drugs and he was chasing. I eventually approved for a section eight and found an apartment, then he wanted to follow me. He would come over and start trouble which caused the police to be called. Drugs and a gun was found and I was evicted. After that incident I was not longer eligible for any type of government housing. I took training to become a CNA. I got my certification and begin to earn money, but with the money came violence from him. He ran my head into the wall, threw her out into the median on a major street. At that time someone called the police and we both went to jail. Jail was a way to get away him and I did better being in jail. When my son was born they took him from her until she could get another job and an apartment. I believe he became so abusive after seeing his mother being abused. He is a serious alcoholic and drug user. At this time I am getting help through advocates and a domestic violence shelter. I am regularly seeking employment and a place of my own. I am going to church, reading and listening to the word of God. I seriously desire to get back on my feet. At this time he is in prison for several violations and all I want is peace.

**APPENDIX G**

**ROOTS OF REJECTION/BITTERNESS**

## TREE OF BITTERNESS





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